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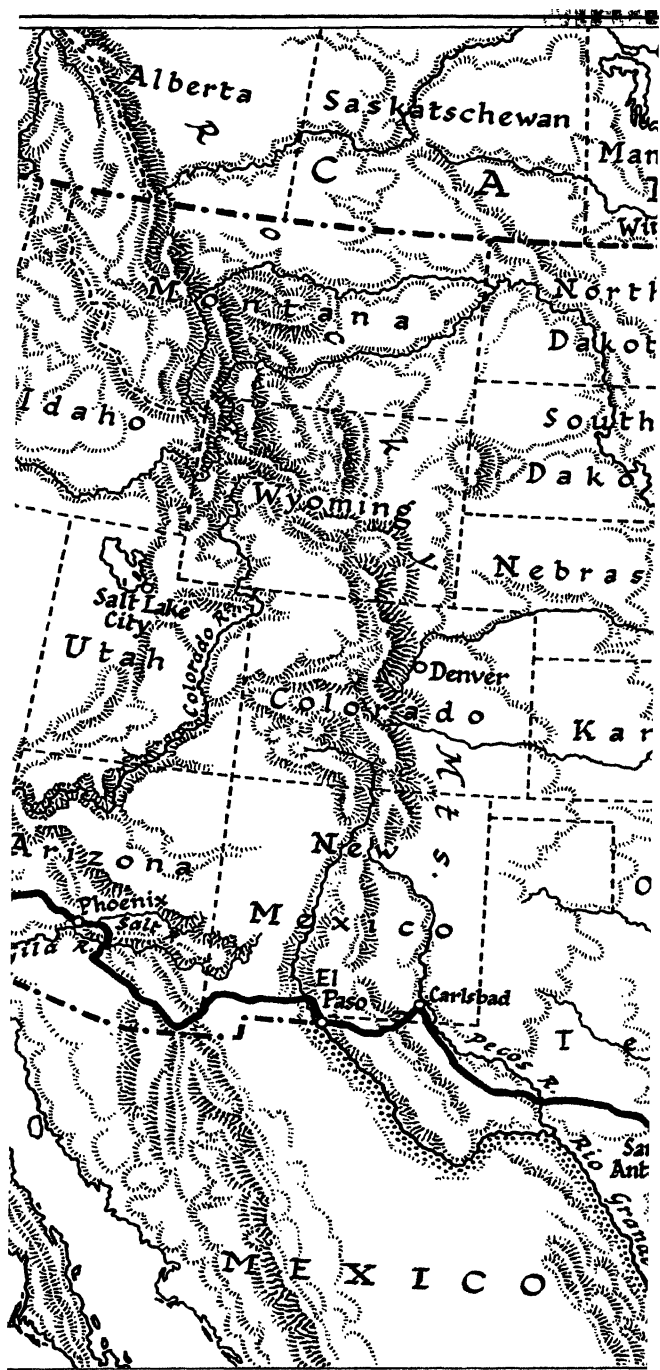
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*NORTH  
AMERICAN  
EXCURSION*



**ERNEST YOUNG**









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NORTH AMERICAN  
EXCURSION

.

To  
EMMA & SYDNEY  
WALTON

With memories  
of  
nearly fifty years  
of  
unshadowed friendship

# **NORTH AMERICAN EXCURSION**

**BY  
ERNEST YOUNG**



**LONDON  
EDWARD ARNOLD & CO.**

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*First published 1947*

*Printed in the Netherlands by  
Holdert & Co. N.V. Amsterdam*

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## PART I

### THE RIVER ST. LAWRENCE

#### CHAPTER I

#### THE APPROACH

ON July 21, 1939, I left the train at Liverpool. The date is of no importance except that it indicates I was not trying to run away from the war, while the rest of the statement is not without interest because that train was the last in which I travelled until the war was over.

I boarded the Canadian Pacific steamer *Montclair*, bound via Belfast and Greenock for Canada. Within twenty minutes three strangers, male fellow-passengers, had asked me why I was crossing the Atlantic. 'Because', said I, in the words of Hazlitt, 'there is nothing I like so much as going on a journey; but I like to go by myself.' They took the hint.

Some people are always offering reasons for leaving home as if it were necessary to defend the habit. They are, perhaps, conscious that there are those who, like Petrarch, will say to them, 'It is a queer madness, this desire to be for ever sleeping in a strange bed' and feel they must explain their actions, in fact must in some way or other make out that travel, like Guinness, is 'good for you.'

One of the Earls of Northumberland told his son that the real object of travel was to learn foreign languages. But I was going to North America and I had no desire to acquire that trans-Atlantic variety of my mother tongue which is rapidly becoming a foreign language or to spoil the purity of my Parisian accent by wedding it to that of the habitants of Quebec.

Johnson said that 'if a young man is wild and must run after women and bad company, it had better be done abroad', but I am not young and I was never wild. Moreover, when I saw the women passengers on my ship I went straight to the purser and asked him to put me at a table for 'men only'.

According to the psychologists we travel 'to escape'. But apart from the fact that I have little use for psychologists — those

inventors of abstruse terms for the purpose of obscuring the obvious — I don't want to escape: to try to escape from myself would be to go nowhere at all.

For my own desire to roam widely at any time in almost any direction I have no explanation to offer except that of Hazlitt — 'I like it'.

In the past, almost any journey was an adventure and so made an appeal to those who loved danger, men and women of bold and heroic spirit. But I was never bold nor heroic and I have found, through much experience, that travelling in these days is so easy that there is no trouble, and seldom much discomfort, in sailing seas or crossing deserts, though there may be a wealth of both in scaling snowy summits, penetrating tropical jungles or wintering in polar seas. If I were looking for adventure I would stay at home where, like St. Paul, I have oft been in 'peril in the city'.

With regard to this particular ocean-crossing all I need to say is that rain was with us as we left England; we had rain and fog all the way across the Atlantic, with the addition of ice-chilled winds near Newfoundland; for 2747 miles the weather was, according to the ship's log, a mixture of unpleasant samples.

We entered the Strait of Belle Isle, the channel between Labrador and Newfoundland, at three in the morning so that sleep deprived me of any sight of either shore and, by the time I rose, a dense blanket of fog had settled over us and hidden everything. It lasted all day and blotted out the island of Anticosti. Despite these unfortunate climatic happenings I could not help feeling the thrill of a real pleasure at the knowledge that we were approaching the St. Lawrence estuary by the historic route followed in 1534 by Jacques Cartier, a master-pilot of St. Malo in Brittany, and experiencing some of the discomforts that accompanied him when he made his first voyage in search of a western water-way to the riches of the Orient.

His voyage was unsuccessful and he went home again by much the same route. He returned the next year on the second of his four journeys to this part of the world with a fleet of three ships and a crew of 110 men. The biggest of the ships, the *Grand Hermoine*, was of only 100 tons: our *Montclair* was of 16,000

tons. He anchored in Pillage Bay on the coast of Newfoundland, opposite the island of Anticosti. He named his anchorage the Bay of St. Lawrence, a name which afterwards spread to the gulf and finally to the mighty river.

Still following in his wake we reached Father Point, a well known landmark, 576 nautical miles from the ocean. This point is regarded as marking the landward end of the estuary, but the river is thirty miles wide and looks more like a silver lake than a flowing stream. Here, in slightly foggy weather, we took on board the pilot who was to conduct us another 150 nautical miles to Quebec.

Memories of Cartier were with us all the way, especially at the mouth of the Saguenay River where he anchored and was informed by the local Indians that the name denoted a kingdom 'rich and wealthy in precious stones'. He was, at first, undecided whether to continue up the St. Lawrence or turn aside to follow the Saguenay which, though he did not know it, comes down through a mighty slit from the Laurentian plateau. He decided for the St. Lawrence. We followed him.

In mist and rain we steamed up the river. A last-night dinner with balloons, caps, squeakers, rattles, toy-trumpets and other forms of merry-making saw the end of the mist. When we went on deck again the night was star-lit and clear and there was enough light to reveal a country of wild beauty, a series of deep blue silhouettes, with hundreds of gulls, dark against the evening sky, whirling and driving and squeaking a welcome.

I woke early the next morning to find we were anchored at Quebec. We had missed the majesty of the approach and, as if to make an Englishman feel completely at home, it was pouring with rain. We had also missed something else — the green Isle of Orleans (Fig. 1) which splits the river below Quebec. When Cartier landed there in 1535 the Indians told him he was in the *kingdom* of 'Canada'; the name was, in reality, nothing but the Huron-Iroquois word for a village.

I felt I must go back to have a look at the island. Cartier had written 'We found it covered with very fine trees, such as oaks, elms, pines, cedars and other varieties like our own: and we likewise found there a great store of vines, which heretofore we had

not seen in all this region. On that account we named the island — the Isle of Bacchus.\* This island is... in appearance a fine, flat land, covered with timber, without any of it being cultivated,

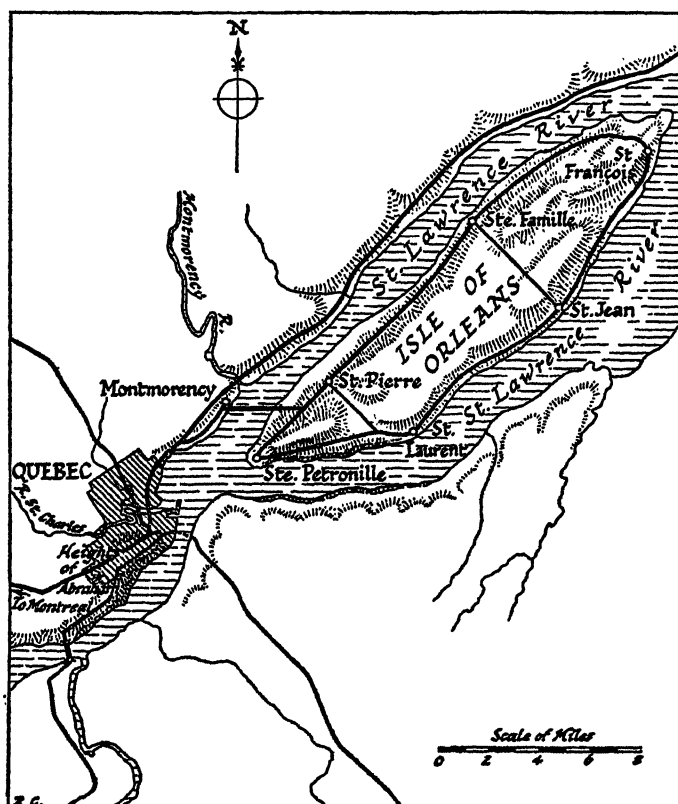


Fig. 1. The Isle of Orleans

except that there are a few small cabins which the Indians use for fishing’.

Even if I had not been anxious to tread where the great explorer trod, I should have been induced to visit the island by a fellow passenger who told me that on it I should find the real spirit of French Canada and some of the indefinable charm associated with Brittany and Normandy, that the island was little changed

\* Cartier later altered the name of the island, in honour of the Duke of Orleans, to the one which it bears at present.

from what it was in early days, little affected by modern ideas of progress, and that the life of the inhabitants well illustrated the pride of the French Canadians in keeping alive the memory and the traditions of their ancestors.

To reach the island I had the choice of a road or a ferry boat. Until 1935 the only means of communication between island and mainland was by ferry in summer and the frozen surface of the river in winter. A bridge now connects the island roads with the village of Montmorency on the mainland. I boarded the ferry boat and, in twenty minutes, landed at the village of Ste. Petronille. I took up my quarters at a hotel where a notice in my bedroom informed me 'Guests must be well-dressed to go in the dining room'. Later, one of my fellow guests informed me that the former owner was so careful about the morals of his visitors that all young couples had to produce their marriage licences before he would rent them a room.

The Isle of Orleans is twenty miles long. Round it runs a modern road connecting, in forty-two miles, the six villages of Ste. Petronille, St. Laurent, St. Jean, St. François, Ste. Famille and St. Pierre. Two transverse roads connect respectively St. Laurent and St. Pierre and St. Jean and Ste. Famille.

I first motored round the island and came back disappointed: the pace was too rapid. I next walked round it, in sections, going to or returning from various points by means of a local bus. One morning, very early, I left Ste. Petronille by a road arched with rich foliage shading the country homes of residents or visitors from Quebec. A little stream rippled its 'Good morning' and a cool wind put courage in my feet. Between the branches of the trees the St. Lawrence twinkled encouragement. In the woods the silver birches wove white patterns amongst the maples. Except for an occasional *habitant* I was the only pedestrian on the road.

After about a mile or so I entered a vast clearing which extends, almost without interruption, round the whole of the island. In this clearing are many farms, each typical not only of the island but of the whole of the province of Quebec. As these French-Canadian farms are so uniform in shape and so conspicuous in the landscape they merit a detailed description.

They begin at the water's edge for purposes of navigation and



fishing. They then run back, at right angles to the shore, first through patches of tidal salty meadows which provide hay for the feeding of stock, then through bottom lands above the tidal limit which are given over to agriculture, gardens and upland pastures for cattle, sheep and horses, and end in the tree-covered hills which supply lumber and fuel. By this arrangement every farmer has the use of water, marsh, marl and woodland.

On the death of the owner the land is divided amongst his heirs in such a way as to maintain this kind of land usage and, as the *habitant* has usually a large family and some of the farms have been in the occupation of the same family for eight to ten generations, the farms are by this time nothing but long, narrow strips, more like fenced lanes than fields, measurable as to width in feet and as to length (on the mainland) in miles.

Each farmer lives at the centre of the highway end of his farm: where the farms are exceedingly narrow, the houses are so close together that they give the impression of forming a street.

The farms are divided by parallel lines of rail fences. Crops which grow in rows — potatoes for instance — are parallel to the fences. The two transverse roads run in the same direction. A plan showing the holdings is practically everywhere a series of long narrow rectangles.

It was some time before I saw a genuine old-time *habitant*. He was driving a load of fuel in a mule-cart. 'Bon jour', called he courteously, after the fashion of his fore-fathers. Then I came upon two men with a hay cart. They were cutting and harvesting the grass by the roadside. When I asked for permission to photograph the cart one of the men mounted it while the other tossed hay to him in order that the picture might be completed. I found it difficult to understand their old-fashioned French but not difficult to appreciate their traditional courtesies.

Presently the high glittering silvery steeple of the parish church of St. Laurent came into view. Silvered spires and many other things — houses, for instance — are common in many parts of America: they have been painted with aluminium paint. In the sunlit distance they sometimes look as if covered with snow.

St. Laurent is a tidy village of one long street. The entrance to it is marked by a little hotel and a large figure of the crucified

Christ with the Virgin and St. John in attendance, just such a group as may be found at the entrance to thousands of villages in France, but not in America, except in Quebec. Here wayside shrines, crosses and images constantly occur, but no shrine that I saw elsewhere was so elaborate as the one at St. Laurent. The crosses were mostly plain, though in some examples they carried representations of ladder, spear and hammer.

Over the little hotel floated the flag of France, not of Canada, and remembering Cartier's Isle of Bacchus I sought a drink, for the day was hot and the road was hard. Alas; there was nothing with which to quench my thirst except tea, coffee, milk and a poisonous-looking assortment of soft drinks. To give a completely French atmosphere some one should establish little cafés or inns where one can escape the evil effects of tannin, cafein or sugar in one's beverage — 'breuvage' not 'boisson' in the local dialect.

The street connecting the hotel with the church had little of the old-world atmosphere suggested by the shrine. The wooden houses, with sun-porches furnished with hammocks and rocking chairs, were American not French. The pretty girls in the streets, neat and trim as the village, wore American frocks. On the other hand it was evident that there was something not completely Americanised. Public notices were in French: the children and young people playing and gossiping in the street spoke French: and the French flag was more in evidence than that of Canada. To the French-Canadian the province of Quebec remains a France conquered, as it were, but yesterday, and he fiercely preserves the language, the flag and many of the social customs of his fathers.

Between cottage gardens flaunting their July glory of hollyhocks and other familiar flowers I went on to the church. By its side was a brass tablet setting forth in French and English that here Wolfe landed on July 27, 1759. It was at Ste. Petronille, however, that he began his preparations for the siege of Quebec.

The task of marking the historic sites and commemorating the soldiers, priests and explorers who passed in one long pilgrimage from the Atlantic to the Pacific has been undertaken, in Canada, by the National Parks Bureau assisted by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board. Local historical societies have also

shown much interest in the work and have marked many sites of lesser importance than those which have claimed the attention of the central authorities. So well has the idea been carried out that it is impossible to travel far without experiencing the joy which comes from turning back the pages of time.

Beyond St. Laurent two very intelligent-looking young men stopped their farm wagon and offered me a lift. The road was smooth but hard to the feet and the pace of the horse was slow enough for observation, so I climbed into the cart. My two companions were no better dressed than the farm labourers, but one of them was a student of the classics and hoped to become a priest while the other was a prosperous farmer. Our conversation was not fluent, but I gathered they had seen the King and Queen when they visited Quebec and both thought the latter *angélique*. They asked me if I had ever seen Buckingham Palace. When I replied that I lived quite near to it my social reputation soared like a rocket, only to fall ignominiously when I had to confess I had never been inside.

The young farmer talked mostly about the land. This love of the soil, handed down from the hardy, pioneering ancestors who first broke and tamed the wilds, is a not unexpected characteristic: the French Canadians have the same land hunger as the peasants of France. My young friend was full of information about cows and crops, and pointed out to me one thing after another as worthy of my notice. He, on his part, was surprised to hear, and scarce believed, that in England we also could grow hay, oats, apples and strawberries. He was moreover quite disappointed that his own strawberries were finished and his apples not yet ripe, so that he was unable to prove to me, on the spot, that the fruits of the island were superior to those grown anywhere else in the world.

I left him at a very substantial prosperous-looking farmhouse flanked by a huge barn, the upper entrance to which was by an earthen incline which made access possible during the heavy snows of winter. Unlike most of the farm-houses on the island this one was surrounded by trees. He pointed them out with great pride. 'And', said he, 'there are birds in them. I never shoot the birds. They call me in the morning with their songs.'

As he wished me farewell he apologised for the slowness with which we had travelled. 'This horse is very strong but he is very lazy and the cart has no springs. If we had come more quickly you would have been jolted. I could not make you uncomfortable.'

By the time I reached St. Jean, about seven and a quarter miles from St. Laurent, I was still hungering for a house resembling one of Normandy, Brittany, Anjou, Poitou or of any other region in France whence came the hardy sailors, sturdy farmers and stalwart soldiers for the peopling of what is now the province of Quebec. Suddenly the hunger was satisfied by a stone manor house which might have been transported bodily from a Norman village.

By the side of meadows sloping to the shore, past farm-houses gay with flowers, and orchards loaded with tiny ripening apples, I followed the road to St. François. The island gradually took on a more Norman aspect. The white-washed houses and buildings with steep thatched roofs were not American nor were the women, sheltered by broad-brimmed straw hats, who were stooping or kneeling as they weeded strawberry beds, nor the two men who were ploughing with oxen.

The church of St. François still carries the marks of the cannon balls fired at it by Wolfe before he captured it and turned it into a hospital. A very elderly *habitant* told me the story and told it so simply that I had to feel ashamed. He was quite friendly, probably guessed I was a visitor from England, and was content with pointing out the deeds we did without adding any comments on the nature of our behaviour. He took me to a field by the side of the church to show me the wooden sheds used in the winter for the shelter of the horses when the farmers and their families come to Mass, and even offered me a bed in his house if I wished to spend the night in the village. When I declined his offer he left me with a genuine 'A-dieu' and forthwith went to ring the Angelus.

Between St. François and Ste. Famille a motorist stopped me and asked:

'Is monsieur going far?'

'To Ste. Famille.'

'Monsieur, would he like a ride?'

'Thank you very much indeed but I am walking for pleasure.'

'For pleasure?'

'Yes.'

'Mon Dieu!' said he and stepped on the accelerator.

Ste. Famille has the first windmill built on the island, a church dating back to 1709 and a convent two hundred and fifty years old.

Through the same kind of country as that on the south but with less sophisticated villages, and with the Laurentian mountains forming the sky-line on my right, I arrived one day at St. Pierre. I asked for an inn but there was none and engaged in conversation with a man who was not a farmer.

He said, 'I was once a monk.'

'Really', I replied, 'and what happened?'

'I saw a lady over a fence.'

'And then?'

'I wrote to her but the bishop stopped the letters.'

'And —'

'He said I must remain religious or take off the cassock.'

'And then?'

'She was not ugly. I took off the cassock and already I have two children.'

I rounded the bend leading me back to Ste. Petronille. Near the bend was a fine house, the former home of the late Horatio Walker, a distinguished Canadian artist. I had an introduction to the present owner, a Canadian of British descent. He received me cordially and showed me his collection of pictures. Before a portrait of Mary, Queen of Scots, he told me the picture, though by an unknown French painter, could be proved to be a contemporary portrait by the beads in the necklace, and added, 'I own the beads. I am the great nephew of Agnes Strickland who wrote the *Queens of England* and the beads came to me through her.'

## CHAPTER II

### QUEBEC

As you return to Quebec in the ferry boat the river appears to be a great lake bounded by high cliffs (Fig. 1). Just where those cliffs are highest the St. Lawrence narrows to a passage less than three-quarters of a mile wide. Here, too, the River St. Charles joins the St. Lawrence and provides a sheltered harbour. Wedged in between the two rivers a high triangular headland, the Heights of Abraham, the so-called Gibraltar of America, guards the passage and commands the way to the interior. The narrowing of the valley at this dominating cliff is a significant fact in the history of Quebec (the *narrows*).

When Cartier arrived in 1535 he found the site occupied by an Indian village called Stadacona. He mounted the bluff, over 300 feet above the water, and saw one of the most superb river landscapes in the world. Opposite the rock a black pine forest came down to the water's edge. At its foot the majestic river curved round and led the eye to the purple rim of the Laurentian plateau. Beyond that edge another forest stretched farther than any living man had ever ventured.

On the St. Lawrence side the slope falls so rapidly that even to this day the ascent is made either by a few old narrow winding streets and stairways or by an elevator, except where one modern curly road winds its steep way to the summit. On the other side the ascent from the St. Charles is gentler, but not gentle, and the streets which lead up the slope have gradients which compel old people to pause for breath.

In the mouth of the St. Charles Cartier left his two largest ships while, with the bark and the long boats, he went farther up the river. The bark foundered. How far he reached with the boats we shall see anon. Of his visits to Quebec, and his attempt to found a settlement at Cap Rouge, nine miles farther up the river, which he abandoned owing to the hostility of the Indians, there

exists no evidence upon the surface of the land though, at the base of the cliff, a modern statue preserves the memory of his exploits.

For the moment we may leave him following his western way and wait some sixty years for the third coming, in 1608, of another great French explorer, Samuel Champlain, son of a sea-captain of Brouage on the Bay of Biscay. Champlain's purpose was not simply to explore but to colonise, and he chose the first and only good site then available. The south shore of the St. Lawrence was occupied by the valiant Mohawks; the north shore, below Quebec, owing to the proximity of the Laurentian plateau, offered no habitable land except one narrow strip; but beyond Quebec, where the high land recedes, there was a broad stretch of fertile land along the river bank and at Quebec a natural position for the inevitable fort. Champlain soon returned to France, but he was back again three years later (1611) to become the first governor of Canada.

He then built a combined house and fort known as Champlain's Habitation in the section of Quebec now called the Lower Town. In this area a French colony of a kind took root and here Quebec preserves something of the aspect of a small French provincial town such as, for instance, St. Malo. Though the factories, banks, warehouses and commercial offices of this, the business section of Quebec, have nothing distinctly French about them the narrow street of Sous le Cap, the little square of Notre Dame and some stone houses with dormer windows in their peaked roofs are reminiscent of France.

Sous le Cap is said to be the narrowest street in North America; it is so narrow that the people who live in it hang their washing on lines stretching across it from window to window. Its ramshackle buildings are the delight of artists and photographers.

Notre Dame Square, with its cobble paving, its old houses, formerly the homes of some of the city's leading citizens, and its centrally placed pedestal bearing a bust of Louis XIV, again calls to mind memories of similar squares in the smaller provincial towns of France. On one side of it is the church of Notre Dame des Victoires, the oldest church in Quebec, dating from 1683. Here, too, the name of the great sailor, explorer, trader

and author, who stands for so much in the early history of Canada, is commemorated in that of the short narrow thoroughfare Little Champlain Street and of Champlain Square to which it leads.

Champlain did not long remain a resident at the foot of the cliff. He went 'upstairs' and on one side of the present Place d'Armes he built the Chateau St. Louis and another fort. In the centre of the square stands a fine and imposing statue to his memory. Facing him is the Canadian Pacific Railway Company's hotel, the Chateau Frontenac. This modern hotel helps to give Quebec, from the river, quite a mediaeval aspect. If railway companies the world over had built their hotels and stations with the same pride and taste, and had so suitably fitted them to their surroundings, we should be burning incense to them in gratitude instead of loading them with curses.

The settlement founded by Champlain grew slowly: the French were not keen colonists and only French Catholics were allowed to settle. Conditions were unfavourable owing to the presence of hostile Indians, of thick forest which a man could clear only at the rate of an acre and a half in a year, and the intense cold of winter. Up to 1629 there were, except for two families, no people at Quebec other than officials, priests and fur traders.

Apart from fish, furs are the basis of Canada's oldest industry and, until about a century ago, her chief export. The trade was fostered in Europe by the fashion of wearing beaver hats, and in America by the desire of the Indians for the manufactures of Europe. The fur-traders, in their ever widening search for pelts, became the chief explorers of the American continent, and the modern traveller is, over a great part of both Canada and the United States, constantly making contact with places whose origins were due to their activities.

Of all the chapters in the history of Quebec, each starred with the names of heroic men and gallant deeds, the most widely known is the one which tells the story of the capture of the city by Wolfe in 1759, a victory saddened by the death of both Wolfe and Montcalm. With commendable impartiality the present city honours both the conqueror and the conquered. One modest pillar marks where Wolfe fell: another where Montcalm was fatally



wounded. The house in which Montcalm lived and the delightful, high-gabled one which was his headquarters are reverently preserved.

Like a good pilgrim I left no memorial unvisited. I crossed the windy plains of Abraham \* where the battle was fought, stood on Earl Grey Terrace which marks its edge, and looked over to the little bay, Wolfe's Cove, where, under cover of darkness, Wolfe's men climbed up from their boats: a small white house stands on the spot where the ascent began.

While I was standing on the terrace I fell into conversation with a French-Canadian upon the subject of Wolfe's victory. I could not quite understand why Wolfe had been left to complete his preparations on the Isle of Orleans without being attacked nor why his men were allowed to 'scale the heights of Quebec' which, after all is said, are not a very difficult slope. To my enquiries the descendant of the defeated replied that the Governor had been a traitor and the sentinel at Wolfe's Cove had been bribed. With real feeling he said 'We were betrayed or we should never have been beaten.' That was his view of the events of 1759 and, whether correct or not, he, still a Frenchman at heart, was after all these years suffering a sense of personal defeat.

When the British came into possession of Quebec they continued the French policy of fortifying the rock which had been begun by Champlain. Champlain had built two forts, one at the foot surrounded by a ditch and provided with a draw-bridge, and another on the top. These have disappeared. The squat, massive citadel of the British, with its forty acres of parade ground, its bastions and entrenchments, still sits frowningly solid on the heights. The entrance to it is by way of a sunken road designed as a protection against artillery fire. It could be blocked by the now unused Chain Gate, a massive portal of wrought iron to which were bolted the hundreds of heavy, hand-forged links that gave it its name.

During the French occupation a beginning was made to surround the upper fort with a wall, but the wall was never finished

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\* Abraham was the name of the farmer who owned the plain at the time of the battle.

and, like the forts, is no longer in existence. The first British wall, constructed by the Royal Engineers at the end of the eighteenth century, has also gone, but of its successor, erected during the first quarter of the nineteenth century, large sections remain. They have no present military value but they add to the charm of the city and serve as a reminder that Quebec is the only walled city in North America.

Quebec has a distinct atmosphere, a personality not to be found in any city planned as a series of rectangles. In the older sections the walls, the steep, cobbled, saint-named streets and the occasional gabled houses with dormer windows and high, broad chimneys are a definite attraction, especially to American tourists who travel about in old-fashioned, high-sprung, horse-drawn vehicles known as *calèches*. Even the Victorian villas of the British garrison days and some of the fretwork-Gothic additions of about the same period have historic value.

Outside the older sections, however, on the plateau to the west of the citadel, there is a new residential quarter with wide well-paved streets whose houses, with sun-porches, rocking chairs, swinging hammocks and lack of dividing fences, hail neither from France nor Britain but from the United States. There is little in modern Quebec to suggest a city of the British Empire except the Union Jack, and even in this matter of flags the French tricolour is the commoner.

Quebec is inhabited chiefly by French-speaking Roman Catholics. Many of them cannot speak English, though the beggars who accosted me seemed to be equally proficient in both languages. The dominance of the Roman Catholic faith is seen in the number of its churches, in many other institutions serving the same faith, in 'religious shops' for the sale of images, beads and crucifixes, and in the presence of scores of nuns and monks on the streets.

I was strolling through the graveyard attached to the Protestant Church of St. Matthew, intending to look at the burial place of Major Thomas Scott, a brother of Sir Walter Scott, but I hesitated to approach it very closely as there was some one standing by its side talking to the verger. When the other visitor had gone away the verger said to me 'See that man who's just left. He wants me

to take a photo of this grave to send to his folks at home. He's the grandson of Major Scott' and, therefore, the great-nephew of Sir Walter Scott.

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## CHAPTER III

### QUEBEC TO MONTREAL

FROM Quebec to Montreal the distance by road or river is much the same, but the river journey can be made only at night while that by land can be made during the day. I can see no reason in travelling while asleep except when in a hurry. To the business man, careful of every possible profit-making minute, night journeying by train may be a boon. He wants, so he says, 'to save time', but I sometimes wonder whether he is as wise as the negro who philosophically remarked 'Money may be all right but yo' sho' kin waste a powerful lot o' time makin' it.'

Even had there been a river service by day so that I might have continued to follow in the water wake of Cartier and Champlain, I doubt if I would have taken it. The shores of the St. Lawrence below Quebec are high and bold, sometimes rising hundreds of feet above the river, but just beyond Quebec the cliffs recede: the shores are consequently (Fig. 2) flatter and the view from the water less attractive.

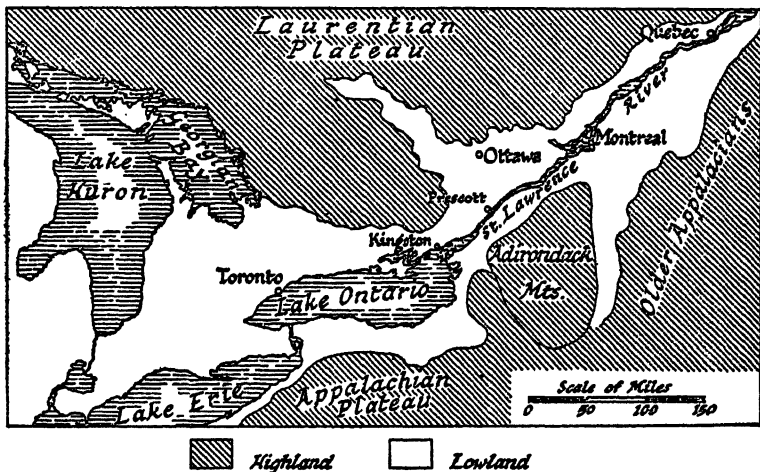


Fig. 2. The St. Lawrence and Great Lakes Lowlands

Having decided to travel by land I had next to make a choice between train and bus. I elected the bus on the ground that it was cheaper and slower than the train and would go through places rather than round them. I sought the bus for Montreal. A Boy Scout spotted my badge, at once took charge of my luggage, asked my name, recognised it as that of the author of one of his school books, smiled with delight and flattered me with — 'My word! I'll tell my teacher I've met you.'

Travelling by bus, for distances up to 3,000 miles or more, is quite common in America and I soon began to understand why. Relative cheapness of actual transport is, of course, the major factor but cheapness enters in other ways. The bus puts you down and picks you up, in many of the smaller towns, at the very door of your hotel; hence there are no taxi fares to be paid. The driver of the bus loads and unloads your baggage with care and does not expect a tip. The free allowance of 150 lbs. of baggage is liberally interpreted: I had three suit cases and never once were they weighed. Add to all this that the drivers are, without exception, models of courtesy: their only rivals in this respect are the London policemen. The American long-distance bus-driver treats his passengers as if they were his personal friends.

The great disadvantage of the bus is, unless you get a front seat, the limitation of your view. The high backs of the adjustable seats, while they make for the bodily comfort of the traveller, block the vision and restrict the outlook because they are so near to your face. I was, myself, particularly fortunate. On this excursion I travelled over 5,000 miles by bus and was almost always in front with an uninterrupted outlook over the countryside.

The western road from Quebec to Montreal, Route 2 of the Canadian Highway (Fig. 3), was originally laid out as a military road early in the eighteenth century. To-day it is a great modern thoroughfare along which, in normal times, a daily procession of thousands of motor vehicles moves swiftly in both directions. Near to its exit from Quebec, at the end of the Avenue des Braves, is a tall column erected to the memory of both victor and vanquished in the struggle for Canada. It bears the simple inscription 'To the Brave', a worthy memorial to the courage and the sacrifice shown by both sides in the conflict.

The scenes along the highway were much like those in the Isle of Orleans but on a larger scale. The narrow strips of farmland, one after the other, seemed to run straight back to the Laurentian hills but they were evidently divided parallel to the road as indicated by lines of houses cutting across them in the distance. There were the same kinds of small woods, the same kinds of silvered spires, the same kinds of shrines by the roadside. The predominance of the French language was emphasised by a notice I saw in large letters over a restaurant, 'We Speak English', and

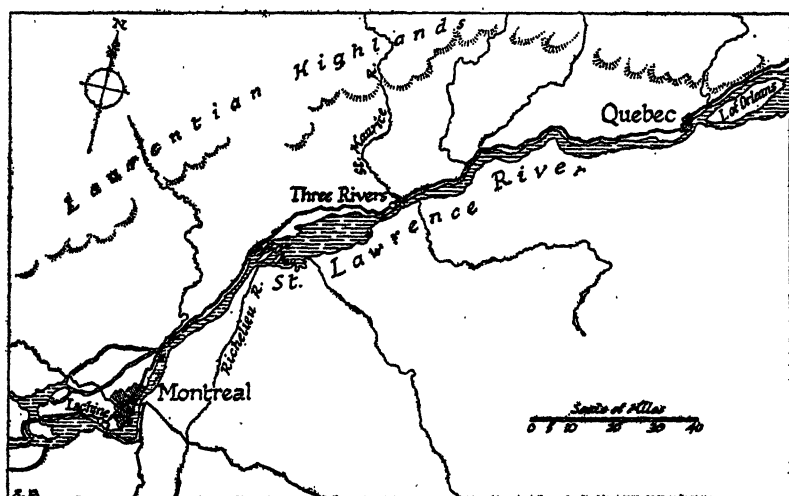


Fig. 3. Quebec to Montreal

by the fact that the names of all the towns and villages, if not Indian, were never English but French.

For a few miles, at many points, rugs were exposed for sale. Their interest lay not so much in their colours and designs as in the fact that they mark a great revival in home-crafts in the province. In many of the farmhouses the wife, when not busy with other duties, is hard at work trying to meet a demand for home-spuns. Long-forgotten spinning-wheels have been brought out of dusty garrets and, in the shops of the larger towns, piles of hooked rugs, rolls of homespun, embroideries, embossed leather, bed-spreads and many other examples of handicraft are a tribute to the deftness of the fingers of the French-Canadian women.

In some of the small thriving towns and villages there are factories which employ a considerable part of the population, but the main interests are agricultural. The gently rolling St. Lawrence lowlands, west of Quebec, consist of flat-lying shales and sandstones, much softer than the hard granite rocks lying to the north and south of them and therefore much more easily worn away: hence their lower altitude. The shales and sandstones have weathered into a rich soil which reaches, in places, a depth of over two hundred feet. In this region an ice-sheet mixed the loose materials which had been produced by the previous weathering, and to them added potash-bearing ingredients transported from the granitic area of the Laurentian plateau, thus providing a soil of great fertility.

The climate is suitable for wheat and other grains, but wheat-growing has declined in face of western competition. Their place has been taken by root-crops and hay both of which are fed to cattle, though there are considerable areas devoted to vegetables and tobacco.

If it were not for protective tariffs the butter and cheese of the Canadian dairy-farm would find natural markets in New York and New England. Because the tariff wall bars these outlets the Canadian has been forced to seek a market in Britain where he has had to meet the competition of the dairies of Europe and New Zealand. Assisted by the Canadian government, which sent experts to study the kinds of cheese the British like, established schools to show how these cheeses could be made, and lectured farmers unceasingly on Britain's need for cheese, there arose cooperative creameries and cheese-factories, cooperative breeding and cow-testing associations, and government inspection of quality in Canada and of condition on arrival in England. The result is that dairying has become a major source of revenue for a large proportion of the agricultural population.

In the production of cheese and creamery-butter and such concentrates as condensed and powdered milk the province of Ontario takes the lead, but Quebec comes next and, while there are creameries in all the Canadian provinces and cheese factories in all but Nova Scotia, the provinces of Quebec and Ontario produce ninety-three per cent of Canada's total output of cheese, sixty-

two per cent of the creamery butter and the bulk of the concentrates. Thus the landscape along Route 2 is predominantly pastoral and the factories in the little towns are mostly concerned with the processing of farm produce.

In the late afternoon I arrived at the junction of the St. Maurice and St. Lawrence Rivers (Fig. 3). Here two narrow islands divide the mouth of the St. Maurice into three channels on whose banks rises the city of Three Rivers. I did not know whether the city was ugly or not, what its hotels were like or whether it had any present-day attractions worthy of notice by the passing traveller. But apart from the fact that night was approaching I simply had to stop at Three Rivers, to stand and walk about on ground which, to a person with geographical interests, is almost sacred. The bus put me down at the Hotel Chateau de Blois. In my bedroom one notice informed me I could hire a radio for fifty cents a day while another asked me to 'Keep Smiling'. In order to observe the second notice I neglected the first.

At Three Rivers I once more made contact with Cartier and Champlain. Cartier planted a cross on one of the islands but founded no settlement: Champlain in 1634, eight years before the founding of Montreal, sent the Sieur de Lavolette to establish a fur-trading post. This post was for a long time the extreme outpost of the French, and was held with much difficulty until Champlain brought together Hurons, Algonquins, Iroquois and French and made peace between them all. Unfortunately the Mohawks, with firearms obtained from the Dutch and the English, almost exterminated the Hurons and the Algonquins and pressed sorely upon the French, who were saved by the arrival of a number of French soldiers.

Down the St. Maurice Indian tribes came from the interior to trade furs with the French, and Three Rivers, as a fur trading post on the then western frontier, became the starting-point of some of the most important exploring expeditions on the American continent. It was from Three Rivers that Jean Nicolet set out to explore the Great Lakes, and that Hennepin, Marquette and others made their way to the Mississippi and the Middle West of the United States. It was at Three Rivers that La Vérendrye, the discoverer of the Rocky Mountains, was born.



In the later development of the province Three Rivers, the half-way house between Quebec and Montreal, was the halting place for the night for most of those who travelled by road. It was in every way a proper place at which I should halt on an excursion such as mine.

Apart from sentiment and convenience, however, there did not at first sight appear to be much to detain me. I had read in a local publication that Three Rivers was a busy mill-town which, by making full use of the swift waters and the numerous waterfalls of the St. Maurice for power, had become not only the centre of the Canadian newsprint industry but the hub of the greatest newsprint manufacturing centre in the world.

Three Rivers has also a considerable trade in lumber and many of the population earn their living in this industry. They have been bred in the tradition of the lumber jacks and, with the courage and resource of their ancestors, fell trees in the forest and drive logs down rivers. Factory chimneys belching smoke, and mountains of logs outside the mills emphasised the tale of great industrial enterprise but did not suggest much of ancient romance. Yet perforce I must go rambling.

Ambling more or less aimlessly about, I came suddenly upon a quiet retreat which made me open my eyes and wonder whether I had not been mysteriously wafted to some backwater of eighteenth century Europe. The Trifluvians, as the residents of Three Rivers call themselves, claim that in their city are to be found the largest number of well-preserved seventeenth and eighteenth century buildings in America, north of the Rio Grande.\*

In this aesthetically satisfying corner there are, amongst other buildings, the Monastère de St. Antoine, which belonged to the Franciscans in the eighteenth century but was taken from them by George IV and given to the Anglican church; the Ursuline Convent, built in 1697, whose loftily placed sundial casts shadows on dazzling white walls; two houses, each nearly two hundred years old, of dignified Canadian Norman architecture.

Two or three centuries do not, by European measures, consti-

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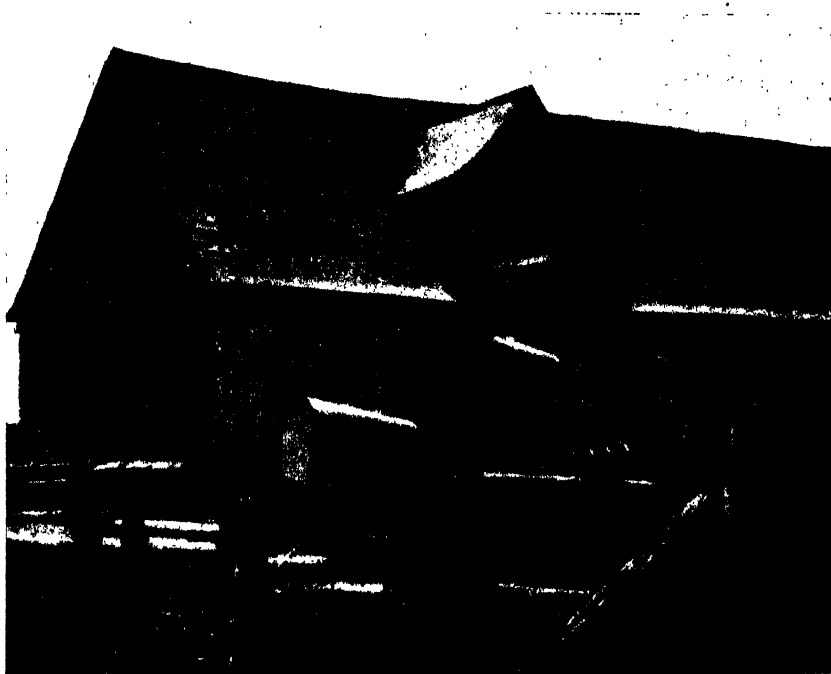
\* But see Chapter XX.



*Photo: Ernest Young*

### Houses and barns, St. Pierre, Isle of Orleans

They run in a long line, near the water's edge and at the end of their long, narrow, rectangular farms



*Photo: Ernest Young*

### Typical barn, St. François, Isle of Orleans

The entrance, approached by a ramp, is high above the ground to be out of the winter's snows



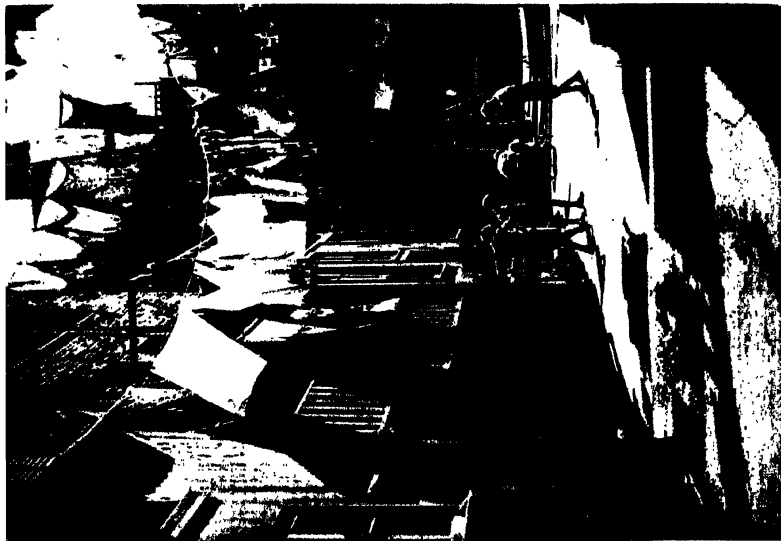
*Photo: Ernest Young*

French Manor House, dating from 1734,  
St. Jean, Isle of Orleans



*Photo: Ernest Young*

Ploughing with oxen, Isle of Orleans



*Photo: Ernest Young*

## Sous le Cap, Quebec



*Photo : Province of Quebec Tourist Bureau*

## Breakneck Steps, Quebec



*Courtesy of Province of Quebec Tourist Bureau*  
**Coast-to-Coast Bus—Montreal to Los Angeles**  
 Notice the tree-shaded boulevards so common in the cities of the New World

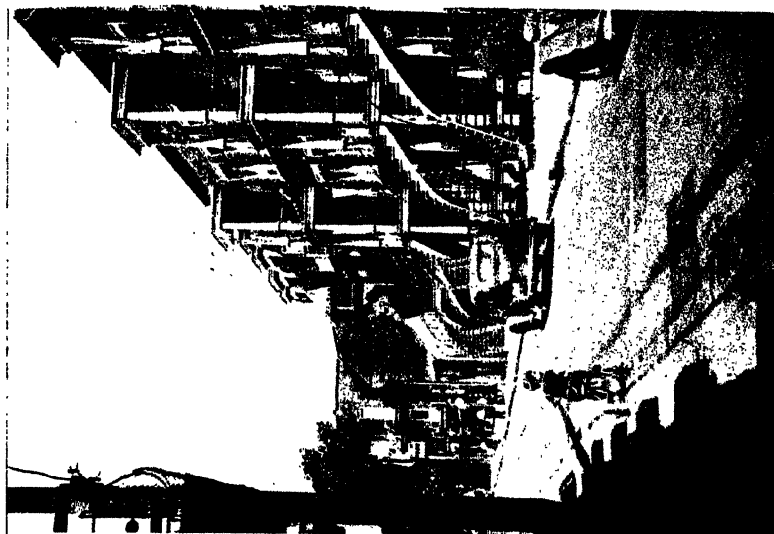


*Courtesy of Province of Quebec Tourist Bureau*  
**Montreal and St. Lawrence River from Mount Royal, Quebec**



*Photo: Ernest Young*

**A calèche, Montreal**



*Photo: Ernest Young*

**Outside staircases, Montreal**



*Photo: Province of Quebec Tourist Bureau*

**Shooting the St. Lawrence Rapids**



*Canadian Pacific Photograph*

The Thousand Islands, River St. Lawrence



*Canadian Pacific Photograph*

The Water Front, Toronto





*Canadian Pacific Photograph*

**Aerial Car, Niagara Whirlpool**

tute a great age, but this peaceful, graceful group of buildings, some of them built with stones carried as ballast in French sailing ships, nobly maintains a great tradition. It shuts out all the chimneys and the mills and is as refreshing to the spirit as wine to the body.

After dinner I sought a French-Canadian and asked him to explain to me what he thought was the cause of the isolation which still prevents French and English in Canada from rubbing shoulders together and so removing that lack of solidarity which, in very truth, is a human handicap to the full success of both.

He explained that the formal guarantees of the Treaty of Paris and the Quebec Act which preserved the language, religion and laws of the French colonists were the origin of the situation. Without them the distinct racial separateness which exists would probably have been by now much diminished, notwithstanding the radical differences in temperament and character between the French and English. What the guarantees began has been sedulously fostered by every possible means, not the least effective of which are an able and vigorous literature which preserves and cultivates the French language, and separate schools for the children of the two peoples. The political freedom accorded to the French caused them, at an early stage, to realise that close union amongst themselves could preserve their influence as a powerful section of the community.

To these things he added the inherent merits of their civil law, the descendant, as he remarked, of a jurisprudence which was a refined science centuries before the birth of Christ, and the ideal, fostered by the priests, of becoming the foremost and most representative body of Roman Catholics in North America.

All of which sounded to me true and reasonable and gave me much to think about and feel sad about as, on the morrow, long stretches of country, treeless except where Lombardy poplars encircle the villages, accompanied me to Montreal, the third largest French city in the world.

## CHAPTER IV

### MONTREAL

AT Montreal I visited the Hotel Windsor, a house of long and honourable standing. As I was stepping out of a taxi in front of it, the driver said to me 'That's where the King and Queen were entertained when they came to Montreal. I tried it myself once but it was too old-fashioned for me!'

Montreal is the biggest city in Canada and, although a thousand miles from the sea, an Atlantic port. Like all large cities and ports it owes something to its natural surroundings but quite as much, perhaps more, to the men who had the vision and the energy to make use of Nature's gifts.

Montreal's natural position is that of a focus of four traffic routes of potential importance (Fig. 4), viz. i. From the south, that is, from New York, by way of the valleys of the River Hudson, Lake Champlain and the River Richelieu; ii. From the east, that is from the Atlantic and, therefore, the world, by the lower valley of the St. Lawrence; iii. From the west, that is, from the interior of the continent, by the Great Lakes; iv. Also from the west from Lake Huron, by the rivers French and Ottawa: this route, which involved a portage between the two rivers, was much used by the French as the name of one of them indicates, and by the Indians long before them.

Montreal is also situated upon an island or rather, with its suburbs, on a series of islands, so that water-ways not only reach the front door of the house but also wander through the passages. Yet it was not merely these things that gave the site its actual importance and prosperity. When Cartier reached the main island he found there only the Huron-Iroquois village called Hochelaga, and even that had disappeared by the time Champlain arrived to establish a fur-trading post. It was British capital and forethought which created modern Montreal.

The British deepened the river, blasted channels, and on the

upper river constructed canals to avoid the different rapids. Montreal, as a port, is much more man-made than Nature-made and man has made a superlatively fine job of it.

Exactly where the village of Hochelaga stood has been often

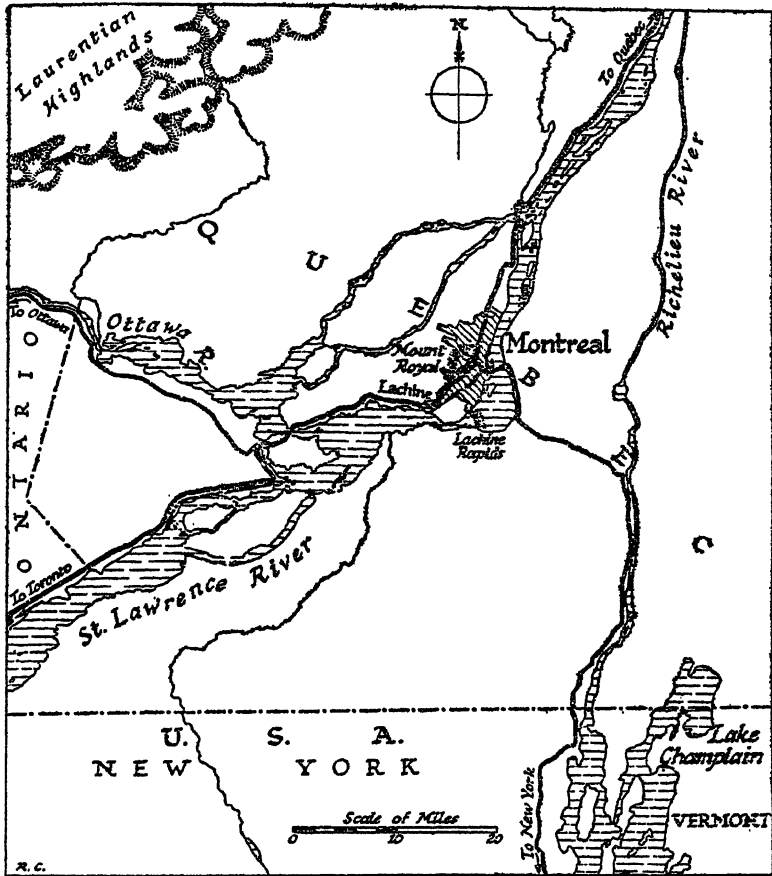


Fig. 4. The Site of Montreal

debated but the question may now be considered settled: on a small stone, set under the trees on the ground occupied by McGill University, there is a bronze tablet on which is recorded, in two languages, 'Near here was the site of the fortified Town of Hochelaga visited by Jacques Cartier in 1535, abandoned about

1600. It contained fifty large houses, each lodging several families who subsisted by cultivation and fishing.'

Behind the village rose the mountain which Cartier called Mont Real and we know as Mount Royal. He relates how he was 'conducted by several men and women of the place up the . . . mountain' and describes the view from the summit: 'We had a view of the land for more than thirty leagues round about. Towards the north there is a range of mountains running east and west and another range to the south. Between these ranges lies the finest land it is possible to see, being arable, level and flat. And in the midst of this flat region one saw the river extending beyond the spot where we had left our long boats. At that point is the most violent rapid it is possible to see which we were unable to pass. And so far as the eye can reach one sees that river, large, wide and broad.'

The mountains to the north were the Laurentians; those to the south were the northerly extension of the Appalachians; the rapids that put an end to Cartier's search for the Orient were the Lachine, that is, 'The China' Rapids.

The real foundation of Montreal began in 1642 when Paul de Chomedy, Sieur de Maisonneuve, landed with a little band of religious colonists near where the Customs House now stands, but thirty years elapsed before the first regular streets were laid. At that time the population was simply a picturesque handful of priests, soldiers, hunters, traders and a few farmers.

Near to the spot where Chomedy landed is all that remains, and it is very little, of old Montreal or, as it was called, Ville Marie de Montreal. Its protecting walls have disappeared but, as silent witnesses of the indomitable efforts of the first missionaries, there remain the Sulpician Seminary and two aged towers standing in its grounds, part of 'Le Fort des Messieurs'. The fort was erected to protect from hostile Iroquois those pupils and converts who came to be taught by the members of the Sulpician order and the pioneer nuns. Over the gateway of the seminary an inscription in Latin records 'Here were evangelised the Indians, 1676'.

Fortunately, as a memorial of the eighteenth century, when Montreal had the appearance of an impregnable fortress and soldiers kept constant vigil on its watch-towers, there is the wholly

charming Chateau de Ramezay, erected in 1705 by the French governor whose name it bears and in the possession of whose family it remained for forty years. It has had a long period of usefulness. After the cession of Canada to England it became the official residence of the Governor of Montreal. In 1775 when the revolting Britons from over the border captured the city it was the home of both General Wooster and his successor Benedict Arnold. To it, the next year, came Benjamin Franklin and Charles Carroll seeking French-Canadian assistance for the Revolution. Their mission failed and they returned to Philadelphia to write their signatures to the Declaration of Independence, but they left behind them a French prisoner who, within two years, founded *The Gazette*, now the leading newspaper of Montreal.

Till nearly the middle of the nineteenth century the chateau continued to be used by the Governor, after which time it was successively a court-house, an education office, a normal school, a part of Laval university, a circuit court and a magistrate's court. It next became city property and now is the home of a museum. The Chateau de Ramezay, both for its historic memories and its architectural richness, is one of Canada's most precious possessions.

To obtain my first general acquaintance with Montreal I joined a 'sight-seeing' tour by bus. For two hours I was barked at through a megaphone, and deluged with a mass of unimportant information, chiefly of a statistical character, with reference to the sizes and costs of the different buildings. The 'barker' was a university undergraduate earning a little money during his vacation to enable him to pursue his studies. From him I learned that in the province of Quebec there is no compulsory education owing to the opposition of the farmers whose huge families are useful in the fields.

We visited the outsides of many public buildings and the interiors of a few churches but these did not hold my attention. There are times when my tastes are not elevated. I was more interested in a chemist's shop where a tea-spoon or a table-spoon was presented with every make-up of a prescription so that the doses might be accurately taken in accordance with the instructions of the physician.

We drove through the highly select residential district of Westmount, where no cinemas, liquor stores or apartment houses may be opened. Because the slopes of Westmount are steep, domestic servants expect to be driven to and from the street cars by a chauffeur: well-to-do residents often provide a special car for the use of their employees.

In Westmount, if your garden is not kept in proper order, the city gardener will attend to it without your permission, and charge you an official rate for his services. I imagine he does not often have to operate. I was much struck by the beautiful lawns used as a feature in garden design. Nothing in a landscape gives a greater sense of tranquillity, or in a garden forms such a suitable background for border plants, shrubs or trees as bright, green grass. In America, where neighbouring stretches of turf are so often undivided by fences, walls or hedges, they inspire a feeling of restfulness and give a sense of space which, in a small area, could be obtained in no other way.

We went still higher but not to the actual summit of Mount Royal as the local traffic regulations forbid motors to drive to the top. Only horse-drawn vehicles are allowed and these are, as often as not, those quaint museum-pieces, the *calèches*.

From the point where we halted we had the wide panoramic view described by Cartier but containing newer elements — domes, spires, steeples, bridges, a developed water-front with miles of magnificent stone quays and piers, long lines of vessels, grain elevators, rising ranks of warehouses and other commercial buildings, and the largest cold-storage plant in the world.

The water front has never been private property in Montreal and no vested interests have ever interfered with its development. It was ordained from the beginning that the foreshore should be reserved for all time to the use of the people and that a tow-path should be left along the bank of the river from the base of the island to the foot of the Lachine rapids. When it was found that ice in the river caused this path to be flooded, the right-of-way was shifted far enough above high-water mark to give the people of the island free access to the river front.

As we reached the bottom of the hill the barker called our attention to a huge hole being excavated for a new station of the

Canadian National Railway and told us the government had just voted three million dollars, not so much to help in the good work, as 'because there's going to be an election'.

Having been duly 'conducted' I took to my feet. I knew that all the people of Montreal did not live in Westmount and wanted to see what happened elsewhere. Now just as Quebec in the east is more French than Montreal in the west so, in Montreal itself, the east of the city is more French than the west. The differences between the two ends of the long streets running east and west are remarkable.

In the east the people are more tightly packed, are less well dressed and live in poorer houses. Many of the houses are flats of two or three stories. The ascent to the second story may be made by means of an outdoor staircase to save room on the lower floor: the ascent to the third story, however, is always by an internal staircase. The outer staircases are dangerously slippery in winter weather and local bye-laws now forbid the erection of any more of them.

In the east is the old Bonnesecour Market, formerly a great attraction to tourists on account of the white-capped, gesticulating French women selling the produce of their farms, and the old-fashioned habitant-carts which carried both them and their wares. Much of this is now a thing of the past. Though the show of fruits and vegetables is still a gaily coloured spectacle, and there is still some exuberance of manners on the part of the vendors, the white bonnets are few, and the picturesque carts of the habitants have been replaced by unromantic motor trucks.

Montreal has, for its size and importance, few good book-shops. On the other hand it has numerous and excellent sports out-fitters catering for the angler and the hunter. The presence of so many of the latter is explained by the fact that the well-populated areas of both provinces, Quebec and Ontario, are, compared with their total areas, not much more than clearings in a great forest. Hence, at a short distance of each of the big cities is the Laurentian district, where hunting and fishing are possible through long periods of the year.

Montreal, as I have already said, is much less French than Quebec and, though all notices are printed in two languages,



I never met anyone who could not speak English. From external appearances the greatest non-British influence in the life of the city would appear to be that of the United States. The porters at the Canadian Pacific Railway and other stations, as well as many other workers, are negroes but not such nicely mannered negroes as their brethren of the Southern States. The big sky-scrapers, often very handsome, the chain stores, and the habit of calling lavatories 'Rest Rooms' and 'Wash Rooms' all hail from across the border. Montreal looks much more like a city of the United States than one of France or Britain.

Brooding thus I was overjoyed to see, on the playing fields of McGill University, a cricket game in progress, complete with umpires in straw hats and long, white coats.

A rest in Dominion Square brought me in contact with a distressingly large number of beggars. I responded to the appeals of a few of them until a passer-by said to me 'Don't do it. They're all professionals!' They certainly knew all the ancient tales of the brotherhood of mendicants. I could not help contrasting their whining voices and cringing attitudes with that of a well educated boy in attendance on a hotel elevator. The gates of the elevator were heavy and hard to move.

'Makes your arm ache?' I asked.

'Sure', he replied, 'but better an aching arm than an aching stomach.'

One of the beggars in the square, of Spanish descent and imperfect English speech, called England 'the old country' but thought Canada ought to join the United States. I wonder what would happen to Quebec if she did. Would she be allowed to continue, for instance, to retain the privileges granted to her by the British, refuse to adopt compulsory education, and receive funds from the public purse for the support of denominational schools?

The restaurants of Montreal are many and varied and make a feature of offering the French type of cuisine. I was a diligent student of their efforts. I remember one which tempted me by calling itself really and truly French and said it provided a 'Dîner des Gastronomes', but the first dish on the menu was Chicken Gumbo, a dish not common at places where they eat in

Paris, and the wine list was limited to a few undated beverages. Les gastronomes are apt to be particular about the date of their wine. The omission, however, was the fault of the Quebec Liquor Commission to whom is confined the purchase and sale of all alcohol: if they cannot or do not choose to educate their customers in the matter of wine drinking, the restaurants are helpless.

The Quebec liquor laws allow alcoholic drinks to be sold only at shops belonging to the Commission. A customer can buy only one bottle of spirits at a time, but he can buy as many bottles of wine as he pleases provided he takes them home. What brand of wine he may buy depends on the choice of the Commissioners, who are not all gifted with discriminating palates.

Hotels, restaurants and clubs, if holding permits, may sell wine and beer with meals but not whisky. Whisky, except by the bottle, is obtainable only in clubs. Therefore many hotels have 'clubs'. Membership is obtained with no other formality than signing one's name in the register on entering. No one seems to take any notice whether the 'member' signs or not and I am bound to say I never saw anyone pay any attention to what appears to be a useless formality and an easy way of breaking the law.

## CHAPTER V

### THE KING'S HIGHWAY

#### *Montreal to Toronto*

I bade farewell to Montreal. By unfenced lawns, good buildings of grey stone or red brick, and open parks where children swung on swings and shot down chutes, I rolled through the suburbs of the city. Quite a number of my companions at once set to work to maintain the profits of various brands of chewing gum, the youngest of them, affectionate couples, making sheep's eyes at each other to the accompaniment of their continuous mastication. I was told that if I did not chew I should be taken for an immigrant.

We travelled rapidly a winding, rather narrow, tree-shaded road much like many a one in Europe and were never far from the river with its little harbours full of boats, its yachting and other clubs and the villas of the rich aligned along its banks. America is a great land for the rich: I am not so sure it is good for the poor.

At the seaward end of the Lachine rapids I said good-bye to Cartier: they stopped his progress but not mine. He returned: I went on, and his subsequent adventures interested me no more. At the other end of the rapids is a chapel in honour of Ste. Anne, the patron saint of the Canadian *voyageur*, where he made his confessions and pledged his vows before starting on his dangerous journey through the turbulent waters in his birch bark canoe.

The birch bark canoe, easily carried on the shoulders over scores of portages, and able in skilful hands to dare the most treacherous waters, was the *voyageur's* inseparable companion. He rode in it by day, slept in it by night, and talked and sang about it at all times and seasons. Without the canoe the history of the interior of North America would have been very different from what it is. To-day tourists 'shoot the rapids' in small pleas-

ure steamers. These steamers return empty, by way of the Soulanges Canal along whose banks we drove.

At Rivière Beaudette we crossed the frontier between the provinces of Quebec and Ontario. A few yards beyond the boundary was a sign which said, I believe, 'Drive slowly. You are now in Ontario', but I'm not sure as we were going about sixty miles an hour. Crossing this border is comparable to crossing the English Channel from Calais to Dover: the countryside, in each case, shows little difference. The St. Lawrence lowland simply grows wider, reaching its maximum width on the edge of Lake Ontario (Fig. 5). But French names for towns and villages and the use



Fig. 5. Montreal to Toronto

of the French language practically disappear. The road signs, instead of displaying the fleur-de-lis, as in Quebec, proudly carry the words 'The King's Highway', surmounted by the imperial crown. You sense immediately a new atmosphere although, as already remarked, the physical environment, for a while, remains unchanged.

Up to 1783 there was no Ontario; there was, in fact, no Canada west of Montreal. Beyond that city lay nothing but a wooded, practically uninhabited wilderness whose only occupants were a few missionaries and fur-traders. Ontario is the creation of some thousands of United Empire Loyalists who exiled themselves from, or were driven out of, the new Republic because they wished to remain loyal subjects of King George. It was they and their

successors who, with axe and plough, in conditions calling for the exercise of almost unparalleled devotion, tamed the wilderness and converted a thin string of fur posts in a virgin forest into the fairest province of Canada.

Some years after its foundation it received another wave of settlers, this time from Northern Ireland, imbued with hatred of Roman Catholicism. To them the Catholics of Canada were as obnoxious as those of Erin and they felt that their special mission in this new country was the maintenance of the Protestantism and Imperialism already established. To-day Ontario, at heart, is Tory and Imperialist, British and Protestant, no matter what be the colour of the political party in power. The province is so intensely British in feeling I felt my own patriotism was but as pink to scarlet. Everybody in Ontario flies the Union Jack and sings the National Anthem on every possible occasion with a fervour undreamed of in Britain except at times of great national stress.

The road from Montreal to Toronto is part of an old post road which succeeded a trail used by the earliest explorers and adventurers. Along it are many hotels, 'tourist homes', and tourist cabins or *motels*. The motels are the outcome of the demands of tens of thousands of motorists for cheap accomodation for one night only. They are common all over the continent, especially in the United States, where more than 20,000 of them compete with 20,000 hotels and 200,000 tourist homes for the favour of over 25,000,000 motorists. Sometimes the cabins are pleasantly grouped in picturesque surroundings: at other times they may be close together, perhaps on the edge of a dusty road or in the middle of an unshaded field, and lack either beauty or privacy. They also vary in their accommodation; some of them are little more than large bathing-hut-like cabins, plain and sparsely furnished; others are comfortable enough and large enough for a prolonged vacation.

In the whole of Canada there is no road which has so many old fortifications or so many reminders of past conflicts in the space of three hundred miles as this one between Montreal and Kingston. A tablet on a cairn, just east of Johnstown where the road from Ottawa comes down, records the last stand of the

French in Canada; a mile or so further on, a windmill, which looks like a light-house, marks the last invasion of Canada; in another two miles is Prescott, the 'Historic Fort Town' where an old fort with stockade, block house and listening post is maintained for the curiosity of tourists.

Prescott about marks the end of the St. Lawrence lowlands. (Fig. 5). From this point, for some distance up stream, the old hard rocks of the Laurentian plateau swinging across the valley to join the Adirondacks create the so-called Thousand Islands,



Fig. 6. The Thousand Isles

whose actual number is 1692. Twelve miles beyond Prescott, at Brockville, I halted for the inevitable visit to the Thousand Isles (Fig. 6), where, according to a Mohawk legend, the Great Spirit planted his special Earthly Paradise and created treacherous waters to guard it.

Together with a number of other tourists, I invaded it in a little launch and skimmed over the blue-green water amongst the grey, forest-covered rocks which, owing to their number, create the kind of mystery belonging to a series of apparently countless winding channels. The islands are of all imaginable shapes, sizes and appearances. Some are several miles long, others but a few yards, others but mere dots. Some are bare whale-backs, others gay with trees and flowers. Together they constitute a fairy-land of rock and water. On the shores are summer houses, boat houses,

cabins and tents; between them the water lanes are merry with rowing boats, canoes and white-sailed yachts.

In some cases citizens of Canada or the United States have bought whole islands as sites for summer homes. Their names and social positions bulked large in the information supplied by the guide. The little folder advertising the tour said that during the journey the guide would 'explain in detail the interesting facts of Nature's most beautiful panorama. You will be surprised at and thrilled at the fascinating things he will tell you about the Islands.' Unfortunately, all this young gentleman did, for the space of two hours, was to bawl through a megaphone something after the following fashion. 'On your right is Manhattan Island owned by George S. Hasbrouck of Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. On your left Totem Lodge owned by Mrs. Gordon Thring of Rochester, New York.' As I had never heard of any of these people I did not find the information in any way interesting and would have preferred silence. Had the guide been wiser or better informed he would have told us of how Champlain and his companions made their adventurous way from island to island, and of their keen delight in the tree-clad slopes and polished rocks which marked their passage.

For about fifty miles from Brockville the beautiful 'scenic highway', a fine example of arterial road building, gave us changing views of the Thousand Islands and of wide areas of pasture land in which great bare blocks of granite made pink and white islands, and little hillocks of the same rocks gave undulations to the surface.

Silos, barns, farmhouses of wood, stone, brick and corrugated iron, patches of woodland, fields golden red with sheaves of wheat or green and brown with yet uncut maize took us into Kingston where we had to change buses. In the bus depot were two very small, forlorn-looking Boy Scouts. They had just arrived from camp by another bus whose unpunctuality had caused them to miss their connection. There would not be another for them till two in the morning.

'What are you going to do till then?' I asked.

'Wander about', was the reply. 'We've got enough money left to buy our food.'

'Why not find out the local Scoutmaster and ask him to put you up for the night?'

'We'd thought of that', said the smaller of the two, 'but, you see, we shall have to get up very early and we couldn't interfere with his sleep!'

The first notice of the site of Kingston comes to us from Champlain but the real history of the town begins in 1673 when the then iron-willed Governor of Canada, Count de Frontenac, acting on his own initiative, built a fort here. To defend his action he sent his friend La Salle, one of the few men for whom, in his long life, he ever felt a warm affection, to Paris. He instructed La Salle to ask, at the same time, for the command of the fort for himself. His envoy was successful in both respects and on his return replaced the wooden fort by one of stone. From this time Fort Frontenac, as it was called, was the point of departure for those explorers and missionaries who penetrated the middle western regions of Canada and the Great Lakes region of the present United States.

The change of the name from Fort Frontenac to Kingston is associated with the arrival of the United Empire Loyalists. These immigrants, unlike the French *voyageurs*, came not singly but in large numbers, and instead of roaming over wide tracts of country they settled in isolated groups, chiefly at Niagara, Long Point on Lake Erie, Amherst (New Windsor) and Fort Frontenac (now Kingston).

Conflict with the French was followed by conflict with the United States. During the colossal struggle between Great Britain and Napoleon, when Great Britain was fighting to prevent the conquest of the whole continent of Europe by a single power, the government of the United States, incensed by British interference with her commerce at sea and by the impressment of American sailors to fight in the British fleet, declared war. This 'War of 1812', as it is called was, according to two eminent American historians\* 'in many ways one of the most unfortunate events in American history. For one reason, it was needless; the British Orders in Council that had caused the moral irritation were being

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\* Nevins and Commager, *Pocket History of the United State*.



unconditionally repealed just as Congress declared war. For another, the United States suffered internal divisions of the gravest kind. While the South and West favoured war, New York and New England in general opposed it, and toward its end important New England groups went to the very edge of disloyalty. For a third reason, the war was far from glorious, in a military sense.' Neither side can be said to have triumphed and frontiers were left unchanged. The chief result was that on one side the people became more 'nationally' American and on the other more intensely British.

When the war was over, the British built a fort at Kingston to keep their neighbours off Canadian soil. It was never used: it never could have been used for its specified purpose. The military authorities in London had made plans for two forts, one at Kingston, Jamaica, and one at Kingston, Ontario. Somehow the plans got mixed but, true to British military tradition, orders were obeyed though they involved building the fort the wrong way round! It was gradually allowed to fall into ruins till it ceased to be anything but a mass of crumbling limestone, between whose carefully hand-cut stones grew grass, weeds and legends.

In recent years the city fathers of Kingston have realised that a fort on the border would be an added attraction to visitors from the United States so they have restored it. It now has the appearance of an impressive military work bristling with guns and defended by ditch, flanking towers and other devices. A sentry, in the colourful uniform of the period, stands guard at the entrance, and an official guide points out and explains the weapons and other equipment, the deep underground tunnels and the contents of the different living rooms.

The usual tree-shaded boulevard led us out of Kingston and launched us on another lowland, that of the Great Lakes (Fig. 2). This lowland surrounds Lake Ontario but elsewhere is partially bounded by Lakes Huron and Erie. The long succession of fields and pastures tempted the eye to other objects and tempted the mind to speculate on other subjects. There was, for instance, a varied assortment of fences. I fancy the oldest were those of mere stumps left on the first clearing of the land; these, besides marking property limits, had also protected seedlings planted

behind them and allowed them to grow into trees and form a living boundary. Then there were the rail-fences arranged snake-wise, easier to make and less wasteful of wood, belonging to a later date when wood was less abundant. In the sandy districts the rails were of pine stems; elsewhere they were sections of logs. The walls of stone, much later still in date, were the result of the arrival of a group of English and Scottish stone-masons, more familiar with the mason's mallet than the woodman's axe. The last of all, cheapest of all, perhaps most efficient of all, but of no beauty whatever, were of posts and barbed wire.

I found plenty of opportunity for an amusement of mine — trying to guess, in this New World, the origins and meanings of the place-names, a fascinating business even if the guesses were somewhat wide of the mark. Nine miles out of Kingston was Odessa, in no way resembling anything Russian; but who but a Russian would have been likely to choose that name? Brighton, some sixty miles farther on, has local justification for its name because, like its English namesake, it has a sea (Lake Ontario) in front and low hills behind. It must certainly have been a Welshman who gave the name of Bangor to a town in Pennsylvania, where there is one of the biggest slate quarries in the world.

In many instances, as in Odessa, a kindly memory of the homeland was probably sufficient to prompt the name of a site irrespective of any resemblance to one across the seas.

Sometimes a memory of school days may be traced as, for instance, in such names as Rowena, Desdemona, Pickwick in Texas; Romeo, Juliet in Florida; or Robin Hood in Maine. In yet other cases purely local circumstances caused flattering or derisive appellations, the latter being often so unwelcome when the inhabitants became respectable, that they had to be dropped. When Hell-for-Sartin, in California, applied to the Post Office Department for the establishment of a post office, the authorities revolted and refused the request until a more desirable name was found for the destination of correspondence.

We stopped for light refreshments at Cobourg and there I made my first, but by no means my last, acquaintance with a type of organisation common in the United States. Strolling about the streets, making personal remarks to often resentful, passing girls,

and producing more than their fair share of noise were a number of men, mostly in their shirt sleeves and braces, wearing Turkish fezzes embroidered with crescents and scimitars and labelled 'Damascus'. They had yellow labels tagged to their breasts and were accompanied by a full-throated assortment of brass and woodwind instruments and a varied collection of sonorous drums. Their fantastic attire and decorations were so suggestive of a circus and their behaviour was so hilarious I had to ask some one who they might be.

'Them?' said the young man to whom I addressed myself, 'They're Americans come across the lake for a picnic. I don't know exactly who they are but you can tell they're good business men by the clothes they are wearing. They couldn't afford them clothes if they wasn't good business men.'

Through a grove of pine trees cresting a high hill we dropped into Fort Hope, where the main street winds through the centre of a kind of basin and becomes a canal in time of flood, traversed the valley of the Rouge Hills and came to Toronto, the second largest city in Canada, typically modern and American in its aspect. The driver of the bus handed me my baggage as if he was a friend pleased to render me a favour. Unconsciously I shook hands with him. He was not a bit surprised: he would, I believe, have been much more surprised, and possibly a little offended, had I offered him a tip.

When I had deposited my baggage in a hotel I asked the hall porter the way to the post office. He said something like 'Go two blocks north and three blocks west.' This is the American method of giving directions. Anywhere, in either Canada or the United States, ask the youngest child or the oldest inhabitant the way to anywhere and you will get the same kind of reply, except in the country where 'miles' will be substituted for 'blocks'. This is a survival of a custom which originated with the pioneers. When landmarks were un-named a mileage and a compass direction were the most suitable indications of a route.

The history of Toronto is a little unusual. As already remarked, the United Empire Loyalists established themselves in several isolated communities. Because such an assortment of widely separated independent groups did not facilitate administration,

Simcoe, the first governor of Ontario (then called Upper Canada), proposed to unite them by means of roads and a capital. One road, the old post road, along which I had been travelling, was already in existence. It ran from Montreal through Kingston to London and Windsor but not through Toronto; at that time Toronto did not exist. The only settlement on the site was a solitary wigwam. Simcoe's choice for a capital was a bad one — London. Lord Dorchester, then Governor General of Canada, who obviously had some geographical insight, knew that a well placed capital should be centrally situated with regard to the people whose



Fig. 7. The Site of Toronto

affairs it would have to administer and not at the end of a long thin line. He wisely chose the site now occupied by Toronto. The earliest settlement was called Fort York; Toronto is a better name. It is an Indian word meaning 'a place of meeting' and so indicates the suitability of the site for a capital and offers a clue to its modern importance.

Toronto is centrally placed both on the long road from east to west and also on a natural route connecting the portage at Niagara with the one at Lake Simcoe, the point of departure for voyageurs paddling to Georgian Bay and the lakes beyond (Fig. 7). Unfortunately the portage between Toronto and Lake Simcoe was long. To remedy this difficulty all that was necessary was another road along the old portage route. Simcoe began its construction. When the road was finished it ensured for all time

the predominance of Toronto as a 'place of meeting', not only for legislators but for business men as well.

In 1813 Fort York was attacked by a fleet from the United States. The American forces landed in the morning where the present amusement park of Sunnyside is situated. The small defending force of about eight hundred regulars, militia and Indians, was pressed back across what are now the grounds of the Canadian National Exhibition — the largest annual exhibition in the world — and surrendered, but, as the enemy approached, a powder magazine exploded and killed three hundred of the invaders.

The Yankees remained for only a few days during which time they destroyed the legislative buildings; some of the men, getting out of hand, looted a certain amount of private property. The next year, true to the codes of the time, the British retaliated and burned the public buildings of Washington.

As the provincial capital Toronto contains the parliament buildings and the chief university. As the focus of a number of routes converging at the lake side it is a great railway junction and a port: despite its distance from the sea it has, in the latter capacity, outstripped even Quebec. As the centre of a rich farming district it has manufactures of agricultural machinery. It has, indeed, become the second largest industrial city in Canada and manufactures all varieties of goods from hats and gloves to engines, boilers and heavy machinery. All this industrial development has been much aided by the supply, from Niagara, of an abundance of cheap water power.

Fortunately, industry based on electric power does not defile, and Toronto is a queenly city with beautiful parks, open spaces and other clean, litter-free, pleasure grounds. In one of the parks, round the grave of the man who gave the park to the city, is a part of the original iron railing designed by Sir Christopher Wren to enclose St. Paul's Cathedral in London. The hotels and clubs are gay by day and night: the chief hotel, the Royal York, is the largest in the British Empire and the Royal Canadian Yacht Club is the largest fresh-water yacht club in the world.

I have already mentioned a number of things which are locally claimed as the biggest of their kind in the world, and even at the

risk of being monotonous, I shall have to use the same expression many times in the following pages. I am not prepared, however, to justify the claim in all cases; local pride may, occasionally, be responsible for the neglect of statistical authority. The element of vastness is one of America's most characteristic features and offers one clue to the understanding of much in this continent. Everything is on a stupendous scale. Storms of terrific violence; floods that turn vast areas into seas; lakes as big as small seas; a desert which in one place is a thousand miles broad; a mountain system in the west which, at its widest, is also a thousand miles broad; rivers which wind their sinuous courses for thousands of miles across bewilderingly extensive plains; colossal bridges, buildings and engineering enterprises; all conspire to make size a standard of quality. One of the greatest compliments that one American can pay to another is to call him 'a big man' — a figurative reference to his ability, not to his bulk.

In Toronto I experienced my first contact with that openhanded hospitality coupled with an informality of personal approach which is as characteristic of America as its vastness. Like the method of giving directions it owes its origin to the pioneers. When you lived or wandered in the wilds you dispensed with both references and introductions. One day, in Toronto, I presented myself, on a pure matter of business, to one of the citizens. He promptly took me as his guest to a luncheon of the Rotary Club. There he introduced me to another citizen, a perfect stranger, who promptly grasped my hand in both of his and exclaimed 'Sure, Ernest, I'm real glad to meet you.'

At that lunch I heard three stories about the King and Queen when they were in Canada. They may, of course, not be true: legends grow quickly.

1. There was a little uncertainty, before the royal visit, as to how the French-Canadians would receive their sovereign: there was, in fact, in some quarters a fear that the reception might be cold, perhaps even hostile.

Hence, before setting out on the official drive through Montreal, the Mayor of that city, not universally popular, said to the King 'If Your Majesty hears any hissing anywhere it's meant for me.' There was some hissing. At the end of the journey the Mayor said

to the King, 'Your Majesty. You remember that corner where there was such a lot of hissing? Well it wasn't all for me. Some of it was for Mackenzie King.'

2. As it turned out, the French-Canadian reception at Montreal was, on the whole, so overwhelmingly affectionate that when the King returned to his private room on the train he broke down and wept.

3. A clergyman from some small town, on being presented, said 'I'm delighted to meet your Majesty and to tell you that I, too, am from the old country — from Coventry.'

'I hope', said the King, 'that you're not going to send me to Coventry.'

'No', replied the reverend gentleman, 'not with the Queen — as long as Lady Godiva is there.'

# THE GREAT LAKES

## CHAPTER VI

### THE NIAGARA DETOUR

ON a fresh, sparkling, summer morning I left Toronto, by boat, for a brief visit to Niagara. I had been there once, more than forty years before, at the end of December when the falls were surrounded by masses of ice, the telegraph poles were crystal columns, the branches of the trees were a filigree of silver and the paths were carpets of snow. Now I was to see the same scenes under the light of an August sun.

After a short run across the dazzling waters of Lake Ontario I disembarked at Queenston (Fig. 8), on the Canadian side of the Niagara River as the St. Lawrence is here called. The mouth of the river lies between low banks, green with grass and trees except where patches of barrenness reveal underlying red sandstone. It is wide enough to be impressive yet small enough to be friendly, and the placid stream gives no indication of the turmoil lying but a few miles away.

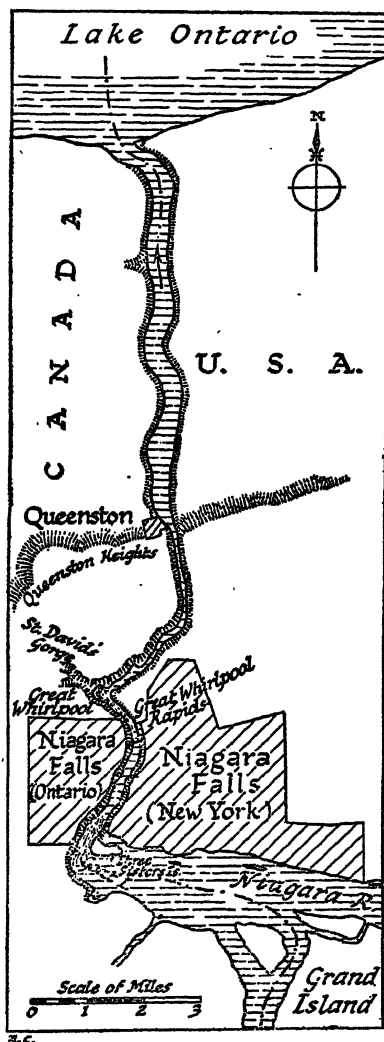


Fig. 8. The Niagara District



In the background, colourless in the heat haze which had begun to blanket the outlook, rose a steep high wall-like ridge which was not a ridge but the edge of the plateau on which Lake Erie lies. At one time the Niagara River fell over the plateau at this edge to the lower land on which Lake Ontario is situated and the Niagara Falls were near the site of Queenston. I proposed to follow the river from this point to the present falls on foot, the distance being only about seven miles.

When the boat docked I slung my rucksac on my back and, by the aid of some hundreds of wooden steps, wound my way to the top of the Queenston Heights. The heat was now furnace-like and I wilted as I walked. When I had recovered my breath and had finished mopping my almost hairless scalp I looked down over the edge of the cliff to the lower, level plain of Lake Ontario, sweltering in the misty heat. It was like gazing at a wide expanse of lawn and grove from the upper windows of a very high house.

There were hundreds of people picnicking in the park by which the Heights are crowned but, with the exception of a score of Boy Scouts and myself, they had all come by some kind of vehicle or another up a winding concrete road. They seemed to be much interested in a tall column erected where General Brock fell in an engagement between British and American forces in 1812. I had no time to linger over historic memories on this day's excursion, but there is scarcely a mile on either side of the river without some connection with the conflict of 1812-1814.

I left the park and, by a handsome, well-paved boulevard of very gentle gradient, began to cross the plateau. I soon wandered away from the road to the gorge through which the river now flows. Its sides, streaked by a number of almost horizontal layers of rock, help in the understanding of the way in which the falls have retreated from below Queenston to their present position. The topmost layer is of hard, magnesian limestone. Below this, in succession, are belts of softer shale, limestone, sandstone, more shale, more limestone and again more shale.

When the river reached and fell over the edge of the plateau the water struck the ground near its foot with terrific force, swirled backwards, drove sand and stones against the softer rocks at the bottom, cut them out and so undermined the hard top layer.

(Fig. 9). After a time the unsupported layer fell by its own weight and there was a notch in the edge. This undercutting at the bottom and the resultant falling of the top have never ceased. In January 1931 a huge piece of the top layer broke away from

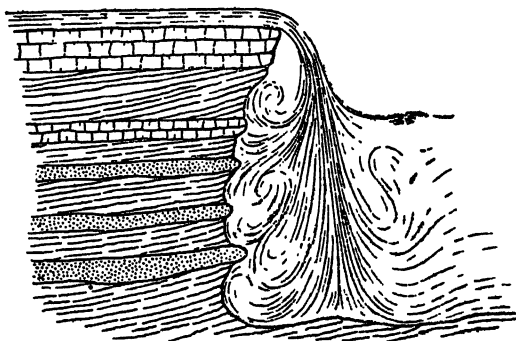


Fig. 9. Formation of Niagara Falls

the edge of the Horse Shoe Fall and crashed to the bottom where it can still be seen. In August 1934 another tremendous rock slide occurred at the same fall near Terrapin Point.

The backward movement of the falls is, however, very slow. It has taken from 30,000

to 40,000 years to cut the present ravine, or to give a more comprehensible figure, the Horse Shoe Fall has receded about five or six feet since about the middle of the eighteenth century. Scientists have calculated that in the year 23,053, which is a long way off, the falls will be at the exit from Lake Erie.

As there was no road along the edge of the gorge I had to return to the concrete. 'No Hunting on these Lands', said a public notice. The only thing I had any desire to hunt was shade and of that there was very little. The road made a wide sweep at the Hydro-Electric Power Commission's Plant whence radiate soaring lines of stately pylons. The building was surrounded by a wide, unfenced, greenish-yellow space across which a short cut seemed possible but, for a moment, I was deterred by a notice 'Keep off the Grass'.

'Johnnie', said a mother to her son, 'what is the shortest commandment?'

And he of tender years replied 'Keep off the grass.'

I took the short cut but I did not break the shortest commandment. I walked on the dandelions and easily avoided the grass.

I plodded on. 'No Fires', said oft repeated notices. They did not interest me. I didn't want to make any more fire than there

was. A car stopped and the driver asked me if he were on the right road to the falls. As the gorge was on the left hand and there was no other road to the right I had no hesitation in replying that he was. He offered me a lift. 'Thank you', said I 'but I am trying to be a writer and have to go slowly to gather impressions.' As he drove away I felt a rivulet of perspiration trickling from my neck to my legs and I said things to myself about myself which I should have resented from any one else.

Presently I came to Niagara Glen where a benefactor announced that he sold light refreshments. I hailed him with glee. I had walked two and a half miles. Nothing to boast about? Well I believe I was the only man who that day had done anything of the kind. I never saw any other soul on foot, and people to whom I spoke of my tramp regarded it as an unexampled feat and refused to believe me. In Canada and the United States walking is almost as dead as the dodo.

The sandwich and coffee shop, a neat, tasteful granite building which in no way defaced the surroundings, is situated near a narrow glen of interesting origin. When the falls were at this point they were unevenly divided by an island even as they are to-day by Goat Island. The larger of the two streams thus formed cut its way back more quickly than the other. The smaller one, in time deprived of water, failed to complete its share in the making of the gorge and left, instead, a kind of glen. I descended by a narrow path to the side of the rushing green Niagara River, maddened into explosions of foam wherever the rocks were near the surface. High above me, on the American bank, tall factory chimneys lost much of their natural ugliness in the haze and the spray. Factories and power plants have done their best to destroy the charm of the Niagara River. The American side has been almost completely vulgarised by an almost continuous line of unlovely chimneys.

While, as a lover of undefiled Nature, I cannot help regretting the factories and the power stations, I can quite understand that men of more practical tendencies should writhe at seeing so much water power going 'to waste'. Engineers had reported that Niagara would provide four million horse-power of which three-fourths could be used. Capitalists and engineers asked why throw it away?

To Canada her resources in water-power are amongst the most valuable of her national assets. They are present in every province and inevitably assure to Canada considerable progress as an industrial country. The cost of water-power is so low that it is already widely used in all those industries, such as the manufacture of pulp and paper and the mining and extracting of minerals from ores of low mineral content, which are heavy consumers of power and in which, therefore, abundance of cheap power is of great economic importance.

Refreshed with eggs and iced tea I again faced the Niagara Boulevard. On the Canadian bank of the river the Canadians have set aside a strip of territory thirty-eight miles long which, except for the town of Niagara Falls, is a beautiful park, threaded for the benefit of motorists by a fine smooth, paved highway. But so far as I could see it had no seats for the foot-sore: seats are not needed where nobody walked but me. I followed it for about half a mile to St. David's Gorge where the great whirlpool is situated. There the road was forced to take a big bend, but stretching across the bend was a cable from which dangled a car. I took the car. The view from it was amazing — one seething, hissing mass of foam and battling waves whirling round in a stupendous rocky cauldron whose sides rose straight from the turmoil, displaying their vari-coloured strata above heaps of brush-dotted scree.

The next point of interest was the Whirlpool Rapids, the terrific aftermath of the descent of the river below the falls. The scene is one of intense violence and the view of the turbulent torrent rushing down the incline compares in impressiveness with that of the falls themselves. Just then it had an interest of quite another character. The date was August 19, 1939 and on August 19, 1859, that is exactly eighty years before, Jean François Gravelet, better known as Charles Blondin, made his spectacular passage across the rapids on a tight rope carrying on his back a chair in which sat Henry Colcord of Chicago. There was nothing to show that on August 19, 1939 any one had remembered the date and there was no celebration of an event which, in its days, had thrilled the world.

Blondin's contemplated attempt had been so well advertised,

that thousands of people gathered to see one of the most fool-hardy adventures ever planned by man. The rope, eleven hundred feet long, dangled a hundred and sixty feet above the clamorous waters. As Blondin and his companion started cautiously down it from the American side men and women, moved as by a single impulse, held their breath: scores fainted from excitement. The two performers, on the other hand, were apparently cool and confident. Blondin wore the conventional tights and had chamois skin mocassins on his feet: Colcord was in full evening dress.

At the beginning of the crossing Colcord placed his hands on Blondin's head in order to throw the weight of his body on the acrobat's shoulders. The rope swayed gently from side to side and gave slightly at each forward step. The vast multitude of spectators became speechless and motionless from fear. Their faces whitened as the men swayed on the rope with wreaths of mist curling up about them from the green thundering volume of water in the gorge. Three times Colcord had to descend from Blondin's shoulders to the chair to give his carrier a chance to rest his muscles.

When the journey was half over the guy-rope staying the main cable suddenly snapped but Blondin kept his balance and, unperturbed, continued on his way. At the end of half an hour he reached the Canadian side and the two men were instantly mobbed by hundreds of excited people screaming for autographs!

Beyond the Whirlpool Rapids lies the domain devoted to the tripper. Houses advertised 'Rooms for Tourists', shops offered 'Hand Made Rugs' and 'Home Made Pies', and the streets were thronged with visitors and vehicles. I was wondering whether it was worth while to walk any farther when, with scarcely a moment's warning, rain descended as if the Falls were overhead and I had to finish my journey in a taxi. When the rain was over I went out to buy a guide-book but failed. Such a book is published by the Niagara Parks Commission but it was undiscoverable in the shops. The lack of small handy pocket-guides is common in many of the larger towns and show-places all over the continent. This is another result of the passing of the inquisitive pedestrian. People who join buses and go on conducted sight-seeing tours have no need of guide-books.

In the evening the falls were illuminated by millions of candle power. It was Saturday and there were thousands of visitors. I managed to lose the crowd, found a quiet spot above the water's edge and sat enthralled. The effect of the white light with which the show opened was, as it spread slowly from one side of the river to the other round the circling sweep of the cataract, like the gradual oncoming of dawn but much more brilliant. The effects produced by the later red, blue and green lights were far less theatrical and compelling.

In the white light the spray and the torrent flung a great outburst of joy at a continuous new birth: all the rejoicing souls of the universe had gathered as at a great festival, leaping, dancing, laughing and scintillating in an overwhelming manifestation of delight. I forgot I was alone in a dark cleft and gradually getting wetter in the spangled mists and, when I left, I had the same kind of feeling I had known after seeing Irving play *Hamlet* and which I still have whenever I listen to any fine orchestra playing the Ninth Symphony of Beethoven.

On the Sunday I joined a sight-seeing bus which had few of the unpleasant characteristics of its class. The ticket covered a visit to all the chief points of interest and the holder began his journey wherever he pleased and stayed at any point as long as he pleased provided he finished the tour in the day. No one barked at him through a megaphone. There was no hurry and, on the other hand, there was never any great delay: the buses ran all day long at intervals of about twenty minutes.

I suppose it is incumbent upon me to try to say something really descriptive about Niagara Falls, but I am reluctant to add another attempt to do what so many far more skilful pens than mine have failed to accomplish. Some record I must set down to give completion to this chapter but, fortunately, I can please myself as to its length and the number of adjectives I put into it. I propose to content myself with mentioning what seem to me to be the chief elements in this indescribable manifestation of unleashed fury.

The first element is the noise. When I heard it in the winter I thought of it as the booming of continuous angry thunder: in the summer it was thunder laughing.

The next element is the immense volume of the falling water. One thing that surprised me, yet which I might easily have expected if I had had more sense, was the shallowness of the water at the edge of the descending flood. In the case of the American Fall it was not more than a foot deep and a garden of green water-plants was clearly visible, clinging tenaciously to the brown stone below the surface.

The third is the contrast between the colour of the water in the two main falls. That at the centre of the Canadian or Horse Shoe Fall is dark green but it changes almost immediately into an unbroken gigantic sheet of clearest emerald as it plunges into the chasm below. The American Fall, separated by Goat Island from the Canadian Fall, takes the plunge in a series of billowy sweeps and, after a few feet of descent, breaks into an avalanche of sparkling snow-white foam.

The fourth element, the rising water, is as fascinating as that which cataracts itself into the depths. From the abyss rise columns or clouds of spray that reach a considerable height before they scatter themselves and vanish.

Associated with these silvery mists is the fifth element, the decorations — jewels and rainbows. Diamonds sparkle in millions in broken water; rainbows ceaselessly quiver their bright-hued welcome. That Sunday morning the wind was blowing towards the Canadian shore and the road was running with water as during a heavy rain. Umbrellas and waterproofs were as necessary as in a downpour, but the sunlight illumined the drenching spray and rainbows spanned the streets. It seems a pity that the island formerly known as Iris Island because of the rainbows to be seen there should have had its name changed to the more prosaic one of Goat Island, but perhaps it was necessary to honour the courage of the old goat which remained in sole possession of the island during the severe winter of 1790.

No visit to Niagara would be complete without a view of the rapids above the falls, as seen from Three Sisters Island. Here the river is about half a mile wide and is rushing down a steep descent, its channel encumbered with boulders. Beyond, however, it widens out, and for five miles is a broad bright stream of calm clear water with tree-lined shores and inland bays.

On my return to Toronto by bus I crossed the Niagara Peninsula, a plain bounded on the north by Lake Ontario, on the south by Lake Erie and on the east by Niagara River. The influence of all this water in a land where winters are as a rule severe is of great importance. It helps to keep temperatures so equable that the peninsula, known as the Fruit Belt, is the home of the greatest orchards in Canada.

Pears, apples, peaches, cherries, melons, tomatoes and grapes cover thousands of acres and produce thousands of tons of marketable fruit. Peaches blushing on the trees or on stalls by the side of the highway coloured the country like a million tiny Chinese lanterns, while at one point a poster screamed 'Stop! The World's Largest Cherries!'

When I reached Toronto I went to the hotel where I had previously stayed. This time I had no luggage except what was on my back. The clerk eyed my rucksac with suspicion and made me pay my rent in advance as a guest without baggage! The hour was not very late but it was necessary to think about a meal. In South America if you dine before nine you dine alone. In North America if you wait till nine you may sometimes not be able to dine at all. The dining hours are from about five to about eight. Many of the restaurants and hotel dining-rooms are closed by the latter hour.

At the restaurant I asked for a Wine List. Said the waiter 'I'm sorry but it's Sunday and we cannot supply you.' I could understand this grandfatherly care for my morals and the rather puritanical observance of the Lord's Day if the authorities were consistent in their actions. But outside the hotel, on the nearest book-stall, I saw a paper called *Flash* on the front page of which, in solid one-inch capitals, was 'Waitresses Made to Sin with Men'. By its side was another called *Hush* whose chief headline was 'I am a Vile Sin Sister'.

Do the civic authorities of Toronto consider the sale of inevitable poison for the soul less immoral than the sale of a little problematical poison for the body?



## CHAPTER VII

### TORONTO TO SAULT STE. MARIE

INSTEAD of going west by water, as I had originally intended, I took a short cut overland to Midland on Georgian Bay, an inlet of Lake Huron. The bus left Toronto by Bay Street and the historic Yonge Street designed by Simcoe, and ran straight ahead for forty miles. The country in many ways reminded me of the rolling lands around London. Trees and wild flowers appeared similar; horses were ploughing singly in fields; fields were sometimes separated by hedges. The land felt English even if one green-grocer did label his cucumbers 'cukes', and restaurants tried to tempt my appetite with 'Fried Onion Dinner' and 'Chicken on a Bun'. The little towns and villages, however, were typically American and closely resembled each other.

Midland, like many other small towns on the shores of the lakes, combines the activities of a marketing and industrial centre with the attractions of a seaside resort. The presence of cheap transport on the lakes united with the cheap water-power which, in so many cases, can be brought to their shores, has given rise to a number of manufacturing towns which are so prosperous that in them is concentrated a very considerable fraction of the entire population of the Dominion and an overwhelming proportion of the industrial employees. Midland, though small, has flour mills, pulp mills, lumber mills and other kinds of plant, and much of its water front is lined with elevators, boat-building yards and warehouses.

Yet, characteristically, it combines with all these invitations to industry facilities for bathing, boating and fishing. Midland calls itself the 'Gateway to the Thirty Thousand Islands' area of Georgian Bay. Rain, unfortunately, prevented my taking the trip amongst the rock-rimmed channels which separate these islands or visiting the Martyr's Shrine where certain French missionaries were burned at the stake by 'cruel' Iroquois. Though somewhat



*Canadian Pacific Photograph*

**Niagara Falls**



*Canadian Pacific Photograph*

General View of Toronto





*Photo: Ernest Young*

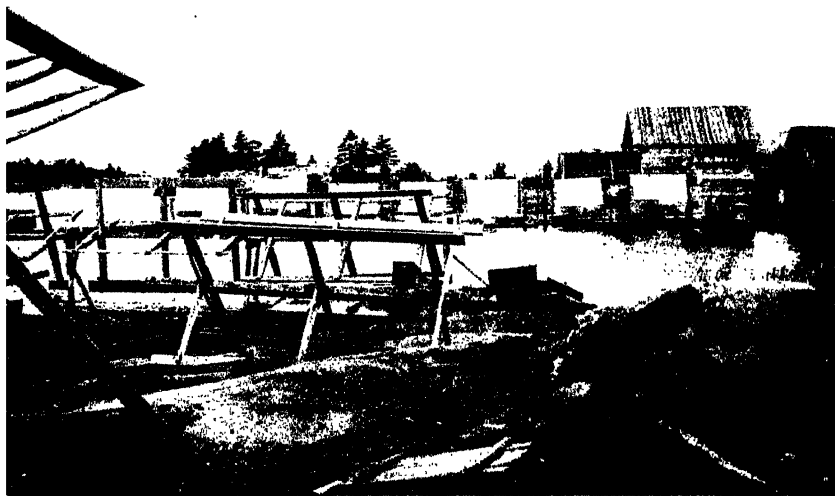
**Residential street, Owen's Sound**



*Photo: Ernest Young*

**Business street, Owen's Sound**

These are typical of such streets in hundreds of small towns in Canada and the United States



*Photo: Ernest Young*

### Drying nets, Killarney, Lake Huron

Notice the granite boulders and the scattered trees; the huge reels on which nets are wound to dry; the wooden buildings in which ice is stored to keep the fish fresh in summer



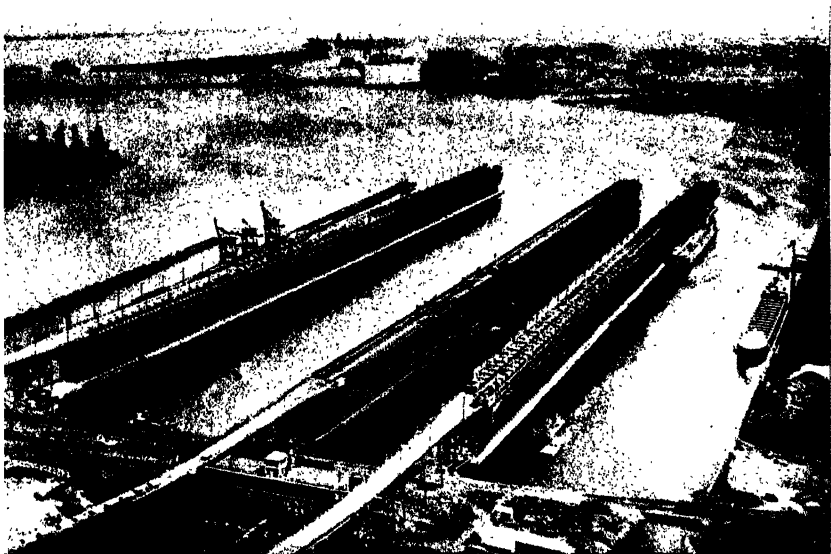
*Photo: Canadian Government Committee*

### Pigeon River Bridge and the Canadian Custom House



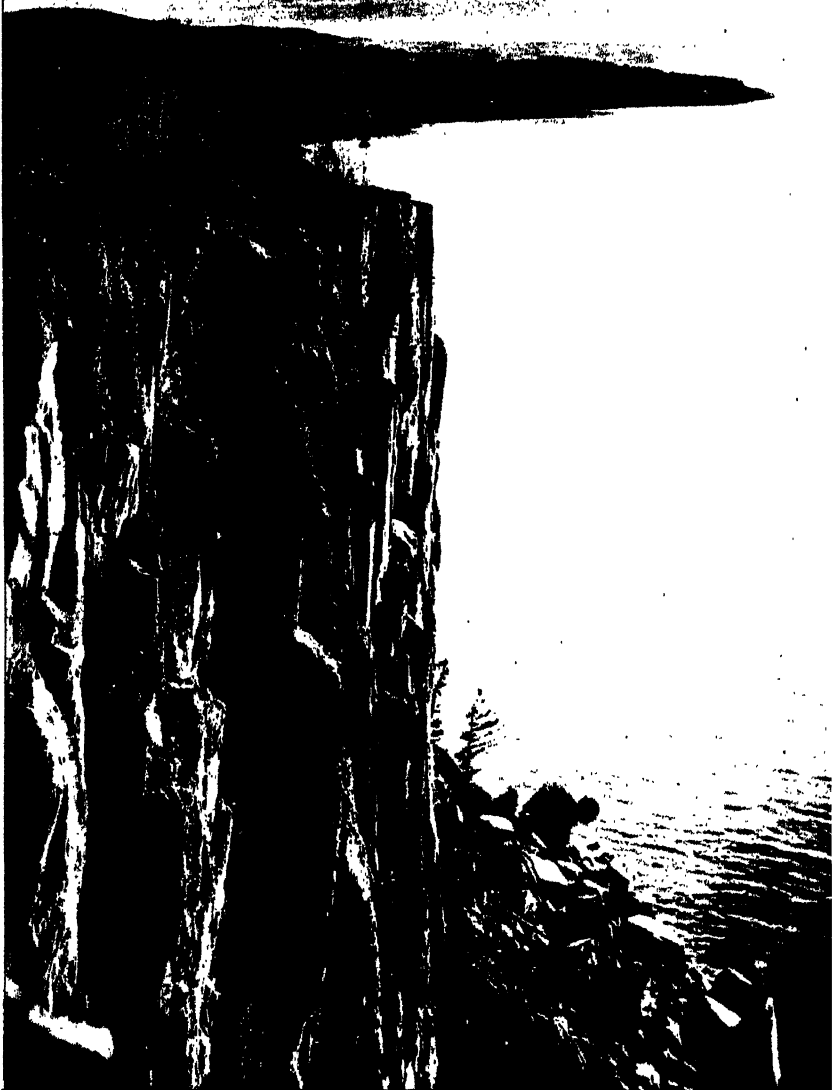
*Photo: Minnesota Arrowhead Association*

The Minnesota Arrowhead Country, just across the border out of Ontario



*Photo: Minnesota Arrowhead Association*

Duluth: ore docks



*Photo: Minnesota Arrowhead Association*

### Palisade Head, Lake Superior

This is typical of much of the north shore of Lake Superior. Palisade Head is a massive headland of basalt rising 348 feet from the water's edge



*Photo: Minnesota Ironhead Association*

Open iron pit, Hibbing





*Photo: Ernest Young*

Lake Itasca  
View from my cabin

handicapped by a Presbyterian upbringing I have not a few piratical and bloodthirsty instincts and my sympathies are with the Indians. The Iroquois were fighting for their own lands and used the only methods known to them in their endeavour to retain their property and their freedom. In view of the fate of small nations and the methods of warfare employed in our own times I decline to apply any opprobrious epithets to Indians who slew

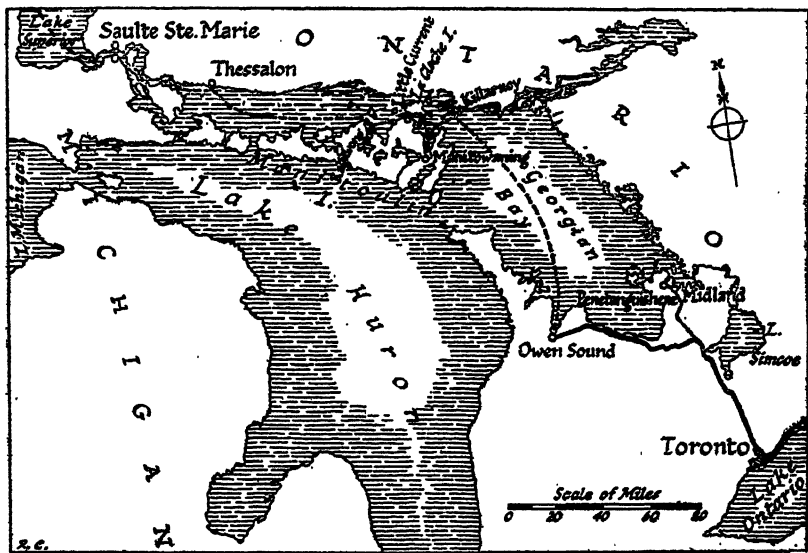


Fig. 10. Toronto to Sault Ste. Marie

and tortured those invaders who desired to 'take them under their protection'.

As soon as the weather cleared I hopped on a local bus and went to a little place called Penetanguishene (Penetang for short), founded eight years before Quebec, and said to be the second oldest town in Canada though it looks no older than the rest. My object in going to Penetang was to meet Champlain again. In his search for the western way to China he had not only explored the Saguenay and the St. Lawrence but, by way of the River Ottawa and Lake Nipissing, he had reached Georgian Bay at this almost forgotten spot.

Champlain was a very remarkable man: his vision was not,

like that of his contemporaries and many of his successors, limited by the fur trade. He knew that agriculture was the only solid foundation for his colony, and it was due to his action that the first farmer went to Quebec, there to settle on land part of which is now occupied by the cathedral. His search for a new way to the Orient was doomed to failure but its results fill many shining pages in the history of Canada.

Penetang, under his influence, became a point of departure to the west by water and for many years held an important position. In 1773 Simcoe made of it a naval and military station and, as a bronze tablet records, it was the starting point of Sir John Franklin when he went on his second expedition to look for the North West Passage. From here to the Arctic shores he found an almost complete water route via Lake Winnipeg and the Saskatchewan and Mackenzie Rivers.

Penetang seemed a much pleasanter place for a holiday than Midland, but there were no seats on the water front and there were too many factories specialising in turning piles of timber into doors and window-sashes. I decided I would not anchor in Penetang though, had I been a yachtsman, I might have been of another mind.

On the Ontario Official Map of the province was marked a steamer service connecting Owen Sound, another little port a few miles to the west of Midland, with Lake Superior. It was evident I had to go to Owen Sound.

Owen Sound is situated at the exit of a fertile valley on the south shore of Georgian Bay. The valley, enclosed by sheer limestone cliffs about a hundred and fifty feet high, is watered by the Rivers Sydenham (Sydenham was the original name of the settlement) and Pottawattamie. The history of the port goes back to 1615 when Champlain landed on the shores of the bay and, at the sight which met his eye, exclaimed enthusiastically, 'Mer douce!' but the first account of it as a modern settlement was not written till 1842 — 'An opening in the bush of about an acre in extent, partially cleared, three log-houses, one occupied by the Crown Lands Agent and his family, one for the accommodation of Emigrants, and the third kept as a tavern; about half a mile of street with the timber chopped down but not cleared off, a deep,

dark, winding river having a dense growth of cedar on either side with tops overlocking overhead, forming the only channel of communication with the outside world.'

Much has happened since 1842 and, though I could not honestly write of Owen Sound with the lyrical rapture of the gentleman who supplies its publicity department with seductive advertisements, it had for me certain definite interests. It is, for instance, quite typical of hundreds of small towns in the interior of both Canada and the United States. A description of any one of them is a description of them all though, naturally, there are differences in detail, due to different occupations centred in them or to differences in the character of the site — on a lake side, in the centre of a plain or desert or on the slopes of a hill. To save time elsewhere I may as well describe Owen Sound and leave the account with the reader for future reference. The description is so well known to all Americans as to be common-place and not worth reading, but it may have for the European reader some elements of novelty, for nowhere in his continent will he find anything quite of the same character.

The streets are all at right angles to each other. The main streets and their connections with those of other towns are paved or concreted, hard, dry and smooth. These roads cost a great deal to make and a great deal to keep in order, especially in districts subject to severe winters, where they are distorted and twisted by frost. Some of them, when the stress is over, may return to their original positions without much apparent damage but usually defects remain, rendering road maintenance a constantly costly business. The side streets as soon as they reach the limits of the town are unpaved, and in times of heavy rain may become quite impassable.

In the residential areas the side walks have a paved central foot-way, bordered by narrow strips of grass, one next the road, the other adjoining the undivided lawns of private houses. No one walks on the grass and children do not play on it. There are no formal prohibitions about treading on the grass but no one treads. The houses have sun porches and verandahs where the family and the visitors sit in rocking chairs, hammocks and swinging seats, to see and be seen by all who pass by. Trees are abundant

and often form an almost complete arch from side to side.

The main shopping street is mean in appearance. It is lined with buildings whose facades are broken by assortments of urns, turrets and other meaningless projections. The houses and shops may be of wood, bricks or, if of recent erection, of steel and concrete, but not one single building possesses the slightest architectural merit.

The chief shops are drug stores, usually at the corners of the streets. They sell not only pills and patent medicines but also cigars, whisky, meals, magazines, toys, lip stick, face powder and other aids to beauty. Their rival in popularity is the beauty parlour of which the very smallest settlement has at least one or two. In the United States catering to the vanity of females of all ages was in 1939 the sixth largest industry. There are always branches of one or more of the chain stores, such as Woolworth's, displaying the same goods at the same prices in the same way.

There is much less formality about business slogans and signs than in other countries. Christian names are commonly used, e.g., Bill's Garage, Peggy's Restaurant and Sam's Shoeshine Parlour. The advertisement appeal is more personal and direct.

'We only keep the door shut', says one trader, 'to keep out the cold. There's a warm welcome for you inside.'

'We need your head', says a barber, 'to run our business.'

'If your wife can't cook', says a restaurateur, 'don't divorce her; keep her as a pet and feed here.'

The contents of the shop windows are, however, as in every other country, an index to local conditions. At Owen Sound 'Skates made and repaired' indicates the winter. 'Peaches two a penny' serves the same purpose for the summer. In one window I saw a notice of a Carnival which was to last for three or four days. The programme of events was eloquent of a social condition and a mental outlook belonging to an undeveloped environment. There were on one day to be both dog races and the dedication of a new chapel, on another a sacred concert and an exhibition of roping by cowboys. Two events I could not interpret — A Calithumpian Parade and A Purity Maid Contest.

Every settlement has a hotel. In no country in the world have hotels and hotel life been developed to such an extent as in North

America. Ever since the first migrations to this continent people have been more or less nomadic and, as the population has spread, conditions of work and business have intensified migratory movement. In particular thousands of single men are always on the move and in need of hotel accommodation, with the result that beds and meals can be obtained even in very small places.

But these hotels are something more than places in which to eat and sleep. The hotel lobby is a common meeting ground for anyone who cares to make use of it, and the lavatory accommodation is free to the public. In the lobby are rows of big rocking chairs, especially at the window facing the street where, in hot weather, perspiring men sit, collarless and coatless, in their shirts and braces chewing cuds of various kinds, and expectorating, as in the days of Dickens, into shining brass spittoons. There are spittoons everywhere from the lobby and the dining room to the bedroom.

The town always has an ample and apparently undue number of garages and filling stations. In the United States, where there are three million miles of fine paved roads there is, on an average, one filling station to every three miles of highway. Some very small settlements in lonely places contain hardly anything else, and everywhere, parked along the streets or in special parking grounds are scores of cars, belonging to some of the millions who own them and use them, even to go down the street.

In one respect the little towns of America set an example to the rest of the world. Every one of them has a park or parks and other spaces with special provision for children. At Owen Sound the chief park is set between slopes, wooded with tall maples and stately pines, which enclose the valley of the Sydenham River. The river flows over a pebbly bed; sunlit ripples make a crystal-edged mosaic of the surface. In its course are islands and islets where swans glow white against a green background. White wooden bridges cross it and give it a touch of neatness. Fishermen angle on its banks for bass and trout.

The parks are intended for use, not simply for ornament or to gratify some citizen's pride. They are provided with simple outdoor cooking arrangements, tables and benches. Spaces are set apart for camping in tents, for large camp kitchens and for park-

ing cars and trailers. Furnished cottages or cabins, with one or more rooms, are placed under the trees, and supplied with hot and cold running water, baths and electric lights. All through the summer the parks are the homes of tens of thousands of holiday makers.

As I was aiming my camera at a cabin a woman to one side of it called out to me 'Why don't you take our cabin with us in front of it?'

'Because I'm English and I'm shy about taking photos of people without their permission.'

'Well we're from the Old Country too. Come along.'

They were from Scotland. The men said they never wanted to return, but the eyes of the oldest woman were dim when she spoke of the hills and the heather.

Other items in the make-up of the small town are many schools, churches, clinics, branches of the Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations, an enterprising undertaker who calls his place of business a Funeral Home, and a Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber of Commerce exists to 'boost' the town. It supports an Information Bureau where maps and folders are freely distributed. One soon learns to discount the adjectives in the folders but never the courtesy of the officials.

Courtesy to the stranger is one of the commonest and most delightful characteristics of the American people. Even the over-critical Dickens admitted, on his second visit to the United States, that he had been 'received with unsurpassed politeness, delicacy, sweet temper, hospitality and consideration.' He who visits America and, on his return home, reports differently has been misbehaving himself badly and stands self-condemned.

As I was preparing to leave Owen Sound the clerk in the lobby of my hotel said 'We had another Englishman here last week.'

'Where is he now?'

'He's going from place to place buying up all the apples in the orchards round Georgian Bay for shipment to England.'

I thought of the Song of Solomon — 'Stay me with flagons: comfort me with apples.' A vain appeal at Owen Sound, for an Englishman was buying up all the apples and there were no flagons because the town was 'dry'. There was, however, other

comfort near at hand. That night (August 24) I went aboard the *Caribou*, a little boat of just under six hundred tons. At last I was on the water and in the kind of ship I love — no bands or organised games, no tricks and frills, no 'captain's dinner', simply a tiny vessel going about her essential business of delivering bricks, flour, candles, tobacco, boxes, barrels and hundred of bottles of Coca Cola, the national drink of America. There was a jolly noise of barrows and trolleys, of iron clanking on iron, of the banging and dumping of things in the hold.

It was a drowsy summer night and the little funnel-shaped harbour was at peace. The unruffled surface looked like a dimly lit wet street striped with scarlet and gold by the lights on shore. Tall chimneys and elevators lost all their ugliness but emphasised their symmetry, while a winking red eye in the distance gave a merry direction as to the way out of the harbour.

During the night the wind rose and the waters of Lake Huron disturbed some of the passengers. This lake, over two hundred miles long and over a hundred miles wide, the second of those inland seas we call the Great Lakes, is big enough to have really rough water when strong winds blow.

Daybreak brought us to the fishing village of Killarney at the entrance to a fiord running deep into the Killkenney Mountains. The village with its scattered pines and massive, smooth, granite boulders is a place of great charm if you are fond of elemental things. I cannot understand why none of the official Information Bureaus had advised me to stay there. I almost sacrificed my ticket and stayed.

Killarney has no land connections with the rest of the world: it is accessible only by boat. During the brief half hour the *Caribou* spent loading and unloading I chatted with a weather-beaten fisherman and learned a little of his hard but healthy life. In winter the lake is frozen and fishing is carried on under the ice. The catch has to be carried over the ice for twenty-five miles to market. There is no doctor in the village but if one is sorely needed he arrives by aeroplane. I tried to sympathise with the fisherman over the hardships of his existence but he did not wish for sympathy. 'Killarney's a grand place', he said, 'and the life's good.'



The most conspicuous objects of human interest in the landscape are the huge reels on which the nets are wound to dry after they have been washed, and the big wooden buildings in which ice is stored to keep the fish fresh in summer.

For a while we followed the lonely coast. Our next stop was for the purpose of unloading supplies for some men engaged in mining silica. The mine was in another isolated spot, surrounded by piles of coal and rubbish, in a forest clearing where the blasts of explosives and the clanking of heavy machinery drowned the voice of the wind in the trees. During the whole of the summer smoke-fumes and steam-streams float above wood and lake, but with the coming of winter all work ceases. The miners depart and nature resumes control and hides the whole of the workings under a dense wrapping of snow.

We left the miners and sought the island of Manitoulin, the largest fresh water island in the world, a hundred miles long and forty miles wide. It contains about a hundred lakes, some little larger than ponds, others as much as twenty miles in length.

Manitou-Lin, or Manitou-Meenie, as the Indians call it, is another of the homes of the Great Spirit, but its first human inhabitants were the Ottawa Indians whose descendants still live on reservations in the island. *Ottawa* is an Algonquin word meaning *trade*: the Ottawa Indians were the first to trade with the French in western furs.

At Manitowaning, the most easterly town and port, we unloaded bricks and flour. Most of my fellow passengers went into the little wooden church. One of them played the harmonium while the rest sang hymns to his accompaniment. I went to look at the village.

Though Manitowaning is small it is over a century old. Houses were erected in 1838 for a commissioner who was in charge of the settlement, a teacher, a carpenter, a blacksmith, a cooper and a doctor. There were also a school house, offices and a general store. The Indians were invited to live at the settlement, receive presents, and learn the ways of civilisation. The first house, within whose walls the Hon. William McDougall signed a treaty with several of the Indian chiefs, is still standing. The isolation of the village was indicated by a hand-written notice

which I saw in a shop window — 'Dentistry. Dr. A. C. Hinds will be at Manitowaning Aug 28.-Aug 31.' Four days in which to have your teeth filed, stopped or pulled and then no more dental treatment till the dentist finds it convenient to pay another visit.

We coasted the high, rugged, north shore which overlooks thousands of islands in the North Channel. The grey clouds which had hidden the land for some time drifted away through the trees and revealed patches of cleared land, and tiny lonesome-looking homesteads amongst the trees and on the pastures. In the narrow channel the ghosts of the explorers were still with us. Champlain, La Salle, Joliette and Marquette were paddling on ahead leading us to the west. At the narrowest part of the passage, between Manitoulin and La Cloche Island, is the village of Little Current which, for two centuries, saw the coming and going of eager *voyageurs* joyfully trafficking and exploring and making the silences sing.

We were scheduled to arrive at Little Current at a quarter to three but, with that delightful sense of the unimportance of time which is part of the atmosphere of little boats on business in out of the way parts of the earth, we did not dock till half past four. This, however, was of little account as there was nothing much to see on shore except huge coal wharves. The water, by contrast, was gay with scores of yachts. The position of Little Current at the east end of the North Channel makes it the most important of Canadian yachting centres. In the nearby waters are large areas of mystery and wonder, inaccessible except by boat, where fish and wild life abound and where complete isolation from civilisation can be obtained. Not all the summer visitors, however, are in search of isolation.

From late June to early September the harbour of Little Current is filled with yachts of many types. The first to arrive are small cruisers from Detroit and Lake Erie ports. In mid-July palatial yachts of the ocean-going type make their appearance. At the end of July come racing yachts under sail. Almost every known type of the latter is represented and a harbour full of towering spars and glittering keels in full racing trim is the usual sight for the first few weeks of August.

Then to Kagawong, another ideal holiday spot for me though

I know I'll never have the time to go back to it. Just a few wooden houses on a wooded slope with a trim, white, red-topped, wooden lighthouse for a monument, crying to you to stay to rest. But there is not time enough to rest at the call of every charming voice which greets the roamer in the quiet parts of the earth. And, as a rule, when the voices chant their seductions one is old and must pass along. We are wrongly built. We should grow young not old as we garner the experiences of life.

In the dark we called at other little ports, probably just as attractive, but of them I obtained no single glimpse for I was asleep. There ought to be a law to prevent a boat sailing through the night when it is navigating the waters of enchantment.

Thessalon brought us visitors — four wild canaries. They sat on the deck rails and listened to the winches. Perhaps they were glad to leave Thessalon for a while and turn their backs on its untidy mass of yellow planks littering a dull, flat shore. Thessalon has been the home of a planing mill now going or gone out of business, which seems a pity for there is still plenty of wood to be fashioned. A former woollen mill is completely down and out: this is less surprising unless there are more sheep within reach of it than appears likely. A decaying industrial settlement is not a pretty sight. Poverty clings to the ruins: dull failure walks the streets. At Thessalon some of the remaining inhabitants were living in sheds, hovels and old boats.

The approach to Sault Ste. Marie is up St. Mary's River, a winding water lane dotted with picturesque islands.

It has low banks and stretches of sandy shore lined with rows of beech and poplar. The dredged, navigable channel twinkled with red buoys placed as regularly as lamp posts, red marks on rocks and red lights set on red pillars. Red is my favourite colour, except when artificial on a lady's lips. It is so gay, so full of spirit, so lusty and so primitive.

The river gives passage way to a constant procession of vessels of varying character from cheeky, roaring, splashing speed boats to grave, grim, slowly moving freighters loaded with grain and ore. Some of the freighters are six hundred feet long. 'If they make 'em any longer', confided a sailor to me, 'they'll have to put hinges in their middles so's they can go round the corners.'

## CHAPTER VIII

### SAULT SAINTE MARIE TO DULUTH

ST. MARY'S RIVER, by which we have approached Sault (pronounced *Soo*) Sainte Marie, drains Lake Superior into Lake Huron. The difference in level between the two lakes, twenty-one feet, gives rise to rapids which stopped both Champlain and La Salle. The Ojibway Indians say the rapids were made by a giant who was building a dam for beaver. He went away to hunt and left his wife to look after the dam. She neglected her instructions and the dam rolled down the river. When he returned and saw the results of her carelessness he threw her into the rapids and, if you will but listen as you should, you can, at night, hear in the leaping of the torrent the sound of her dying cries.

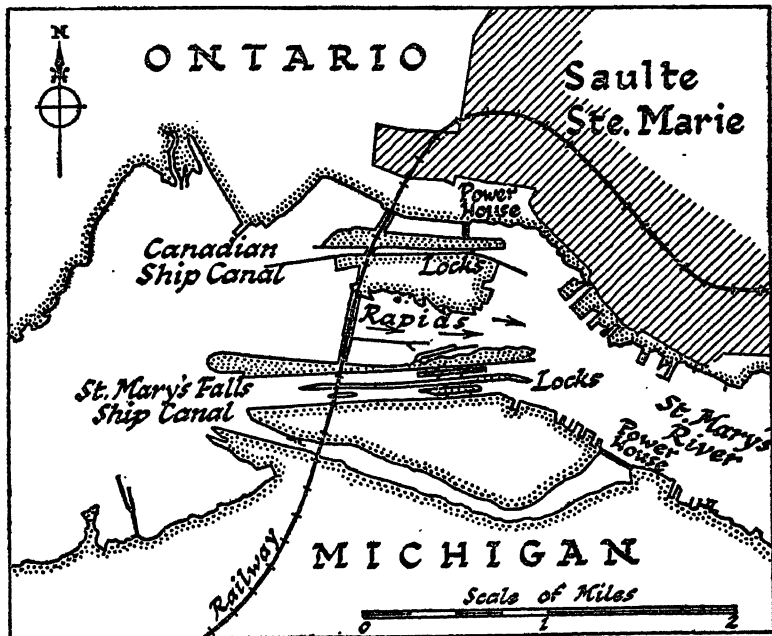


Fig. 11. The Soo Canals

To-day the rapids are avoided by the Soo canals (Fig. 11) one on the Canadian and one on the American side. Through these two canals, during eight months in every year, pass three times as many vessels and three times as much tonnage as through the Suez or Panama Canals in the whole of a year.

Sault Ste. Marie is simply a traffic junction. Almost all I remember about it, apart from its geographical position and its economic function, is a portrait of the Duke of Windsor which I saw in a shop window. It was accompanied by a letter signed by his equerry which said 'I am desired by the Duke of Windsor to thank you for your letter of May 27th and to inform you that His Royal Highness can see no reason against you paying him the compliment of naming your billiard hall 'The Duke of Windsor's Billiard Academy.' The recipient of the letter had, however, shortened the proposed title and called his establishment 'The Duke's Place'.

At the Soo I boarded the Canadian Steamship Company's *Noronic*, of 6905 tons, one of the largest and finest tourist boats on the lake. It had a barber's shop, smoking room, music and writing rooms, observation rooms, buffet bars and 'a cultured, experienced Social Hostess: it is her pleasure and privilege to devote her entire time and energy to promoting the happiness of our guests.' My tastes being what they are I would have preferred something less elaborate and costly, but I had no choice. The only vessels permitted to carry passengers on the St. Lawrence beyond Montreal and on the Great Lakes appear to be these luxurious and expensive tourist boats.

We entered the canal. The huge lock gates were closed. We rose slowly. A shrill whistle sounded and we sailed out towards the majestic inland sea, Lake Superior, the largest fresh water lake in the world, as long as the distance from Berwick-on-Tweed to Land's End and nearly as large as Ireland. Lake Superior is ocean-like in its excitements as well as in its proportions: it is so subject to fogs and sudden violent storms that the rates of insurance on vessels navigating it are higher than they are on the Atlantic. But it lacks the tang of the salty ocean and is so pure that its water can be used direct from the tap, for storage batteries and other purposes which ordinarily call for distilled water.

We were soon out of sight of land as completely as if we had been at sea. Far away, but invisible, were small mining and lumbering towns, while to the north of them was an uninhabited wilderness reaching to the shores of Hudson Bay.

With the dawn came the impressive entry into the harbour of the twin cities of Port Arthur and Fort William. Mount McKay, one of the highest peaks of the Laurentian system (1587 feet) with its cross to the memory of the Indians who fell in World War I, was catching the first rays of the morning; the Sleeping Giant lay recumbent across the entrance to Thunder Bay; the huge white grain elevators were mediaeval castles in the sunlit mists.

I was glad, as I stepped ashore, that I had spent the last four days on the water and had reached the heart of the continent by more or less the same route as that of the early explorers. Canada, with its innumerable streams and lakes, offered thousands of miles of ready-made highways without which the penetration of the interior by the French would have been impossible. They still remain of the greatest value to the commerce of Canada but they are not quite as fine as they look on the map. The chief of them, the Great Lakes — St. Lawrence waterway is, as we have seen, impeded by rapids which compelled the construction of expensive canals to open it up to its farthest limits, and it also suffers in being closed by ice for five months of the year. The hotel porter at Port Arthur told me it was no uncommon occurrence for the lake to be frozen solid twenty miles from the shore.

The ice is responsible for the importance of Port Arthur and Fort William as storehouses for grain. Only one-fifth of the wheat crop of the prairies can, in any given year, reach Montreal before navigation ceases: all the rest must wait for the coming of the next spring and summer. The elevators in which it is stored are colossal: their capacity in bushels mounts into figures which baffle the imagination.

When the thaw comes, some sixty vessels leave the twin ports with the dignity of a great naval parade, except that each captain is doing his level best to beat his rivals in the race to the first lock where the first delay must take place.

I walked from the business section of Port Arthur up through a pleasant residential district to a view point in Holland Park.

The wide-spread panorama, from Mount McKay on the one hand to the dark silhouette of the Sleeping Giant on the other, is dotted with gabled houses set amongst trees, factory chimneys, breakwaters, elevators, freighters, whalebacks and more Union Jacks than London ever shows except on festal days and, of more immediate interest, a number of vast dark looking stains upon the surface of the lake. The acres of stains are millions of logs.

The logs represent the second phase in the exploitation of the Upper Lake Region. The first was concerned with fur: the second with lumber. The Canadian forest has meant different things to different people. To the Indian it was the source of wood for boats, houses and fuel, of bark for clothes and canoes, and of roots for fishing lines. To the French it served also for supplies of fuel and building materials, and for an early shipbuilding industry, but more especially it provided them with a kind of paradise in which they roamed as they listed, hunted, fished, bartered and, in their spare time, wooed the Indian maidens.

The British, of weaker romantic but stronger commercial instincts, valued the forest first as a source of lumber and then, in our own times, as a source of wood suitable for the manufacture of paper pulp. To-day, though much merchantable timber remains, the forest is commercially most valuable as a storehouse of raw material for paper and other wood products.

Armed with a personal introduction I went to see the plant of Provincial Papers Ltd., the largest book-paper mill in Canada. I need not, as I soon found out, have bothered to obtain the introduction. Visitors are permitted to view the works without guides. All they have to do is to ask for a permit at the office and then follow a series of yellow arrows through the different buildings. Each building is numbered and a little pamphlet, provided without any charge, explains the operations that are seen.

With the aid of that pamphlet I could give extensive details about the various technical processes, but I forbear. It will be sufficient to say that I saw the logs crawl, one by one, out of the lake, stripped of their bark, chopped into two-foot lengths, ground between large stones, stewed and bleached and converted into rolls of paper at the rate of tens of thousands of tons a year. The only power used is electric of which there is such a super-

abundance, owing to the water power available, that it is actually used to produce steam, thus reversing the process, so familiar in lands of coal, of using steam to produce electricity.

As I left the building my host remarked to me 'If you want to see the real Canada go into the country. The cities make the noise but the country does the work.'

I took his advice and stepped into a bus for a little run of about two hundred miles to Duluth. In the bus was a notice 'Smoking is allowed only on rear seats', but there were ash trays

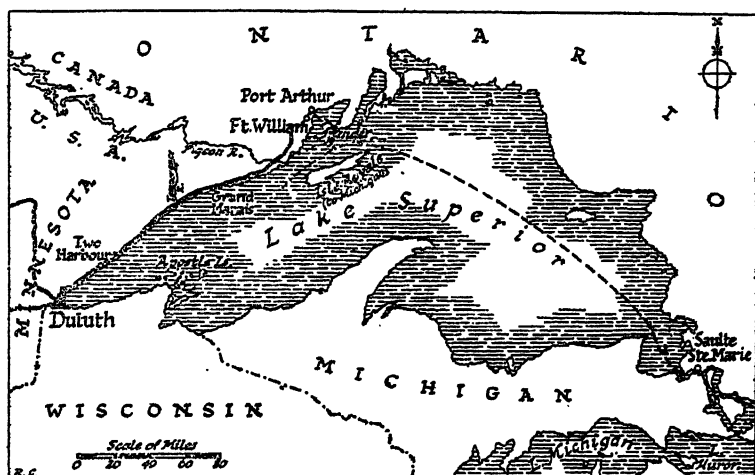


Fig. 12. Sault Ste. Marie to Duluth

to every seat. 'This', said the driver, 'is because there are now always more women than rear seats and the women won't obey the regulations'. For myself, in a front seat, I decided to observe the prohibition of the printed word and not accept the invitation of the ash-tray.

The day was grey and cold. The cold was welcome enough but the crying rain that accompanied it was not. The dignified head of Mount McKay was hidden in the clouds. The road, described with patriotic but unmistakable exaggeration by the writer of a folder as 'an unending panorama of scenic grandeur unequalled in America' is, nevertheless, of some beauty. After leaving Fort William it turns inland and, for a while, winds its way through



valleys walled by basalt ridges, bluffs and palisades often several hundred feet in height. The gentler slopes are clothed with spruce and balsam mixed with maple, birch and poplar: the steepest slopes are bare. In the autumn the variegated colouring of the woods must rival the hues of a Persian carpet.

We next sped, like an arrow, over long straight roads through rolling country almost uninhabited except where a few small clearings for clover and wheat had been made in the thousands of square miles of untamed forest.

We stopped at pathetic little homesteads to drop a parcel or a child, and by the road-side to pick up a solitary can of milk or take aboard a man with a bag of axes going, all by himself, to fell a few more trees. We passed an occasional church but saw no towns or villages. Notices along the road — 'Spring water, 100 feet' — are perhaps not so necessary in these motoring days as they were in the epoch of the horseman and the covered wagon.

Good bridges gave us passage over many small streams, and without delay or accident we arrived at Pigeon River, which forms part of the international boundary between Canada and the United States. The river received its name from the flocks of pigeons which once assembled in the forest. Bear this river in mind, for it once played a part in a highly important matter to which I shall have to make a later reference (page 93). The valley, upstream from the bridge, was beautiful with trees and rushing water but the banks immediately at hand were sparsely wooded: here and there, such trees as there were, were perched with risky footing on narrow, rocky ledges.

On the other side of the bridge my baggage was carefully and courteously examined by the U.S.S. Customs officers and I paid eight dollars for the privilege of being allowed to stay in the United States for more than sixty days. I've quite forgotten how many forms I filled up and signed but the officer who superintended the formalities was a kindly soul, even apologetic. He explained that only during the last two or three years had there been all this kind of fuss.

My entry into the United States was made at the north-east corner of Minnesota in what is known, because of its shape, as the Arrowhead Country (Fig. 13). The head of the triangle is at

the bridge; two of the sides are, respectively, Pigeon River and the rock-bound north shore of Lake Superior. The road, except for the first few miles, ran parallel with the sparkling shore through miles of brooding forest which often hid the lake from view.

A part of this forest, forming the core of the Arrowhead country, is one of America's last wildernesses. Within an area cover-

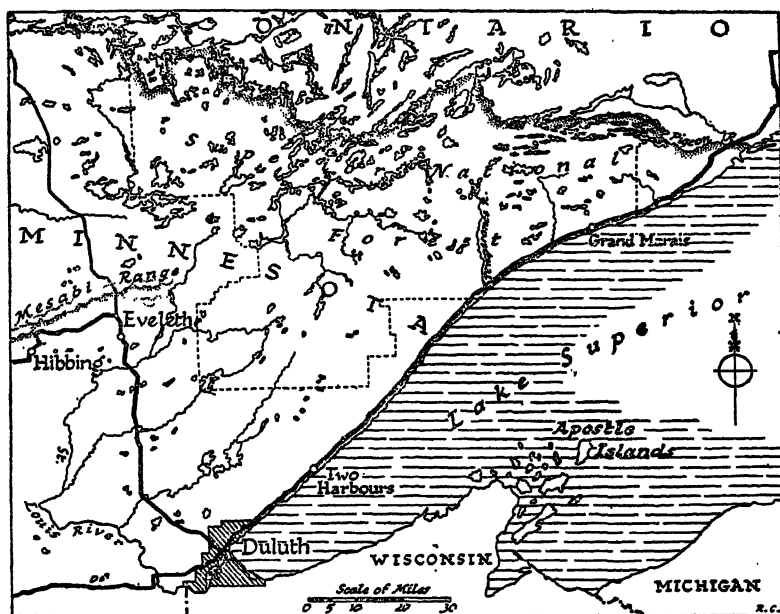


Fig. 13. The Upper Lake Region

ing nearly four million acres there will never be any motor roads, summer houses or other artificial structures. This clean, fresh land of lakes and streams, of virgin pine and towering spruce is the Superior National Forest. At one time Minnesota was all heavily forested but the lumber men cut out the best accessible trees over wide areas: the trees one sees from the bus are mostly natural second growth, leaved in fainter green than the older wood, shorter in stature and more slender of girth.

The forest's worst enemy, however, is not man but fire. Hence

the numerous appeals which kept us company along the highway — 'Please keep our forests green'. 'Please help prevent forest fires', 'One tree makes a million matches: one match burns a million trees'. Fire wastes an enormous amount of mature timber, destroys the young growth upon which the further supply of lumber depends and much of the sponge-like humus which covers the surface of the ground. It ruins the hunting and fishing, spoils possible camping places, injures the flow of streams and mars the beauty of the lakes.

In the Superior National Forest, as in all the other national forests, a small army of forest officers and rangers protects and administers the woodland. During the summer, when danger from fire is greatest, the force is heavily increased. From the tops of steel towers men are constantly on watch for the first sign of an outbreak. Within a few minutes after a fire is reported the ranger is on his way to fight it and, if possible, to find and prosecute the person responsible for it.

The Forest Service has other duties besides putting out fires. It aims to market mature timber as a farmer does a wheat crop and to make room for young, growing trees in order to keep the forest in a productive condition. The amount of timber now cut each year is less than the amount grown so that the forest is preserved, a constant supply of timber is guaranteed, the game sanctuaries are safe-guarded, the natural reservoir holds back flood waters, and the forest remains, with its pine-fringed trails, its turbulent streams and its placid lakes, a perpetual source of beauty and inspiration to the soul of man.

Along the lonely road through all this sylvan loveliness we rode with little sight of human habitation until, about a hundred miles east of Duluth, we reached the thriving village of Grand Marais. Thence onward the scenery was more varied. At one time we were travelling over barren rock-bound areas; at another through beautiful sweeps of virgin timber, threaded by an endless succession of streams coming down from the highlands. Now we were on the edge of a precipice, now at the foot of jagged rocks towering hundreds of feet above us, following curves which led in and out of innumerable coves where shelter the simple abodes of the fishermen who dwell upon the shores of the sea like lake.

After crossing Temperance River, jokingly so-called because it is the only stream on the north shore of Lake Superior that has no bar at its mouth, we traversed a ledge on a cliff, Palisade Head, the highest point on the route, and then descended to Two Harbours, the shipping point for ore from the Vermillion Iron Range.

Two Harbours put me in touch with the third phase in the exploitation of the Upper Lakes Region, that of mining, and near one of the sources of the freighted ore of which I had seen so much on the lakes; but as I was going elsewhere to examine mines and ore docks I let the bus carry me to Duluth, the metropolis of the Arrowhead country.

As a city Duluth is young but it was the site of Indian settlement in remote times. The surrounding country was well known to the French pioneers, one of whom, Du Luht, founded a fur-trading post in it. The post passed into the hands of the British and then into those of the United States, but its growth was so slow that in 1856 it was a village of but fourteen buildings. No railway connected it with the rest of the world till a year after I was born, yet to-day its harbour is second in total net tonnage only to New York itself. In the peak year of 1935 over eleven thousand vessels, during the eight months free from ice, entered and left the harbour. The explanation of this phenomenal growth is iron ore.

About one-third of all the iron mines in the United States are in the north-east of Minnesota and from them is taken sixty-five per cent of all the iron ore mined in the country. It reaches the docks by railways laid on high overhead tracks. It comes in special trucks, as many as eighty-five to one locomotive, that crawl and wind over these aerial trails like some gigantic, pre-historic reptile. The train halts, high in the air, by the sides of the docks. Down below are the freighters waiting. Each freighter is a long floating box divided into a series of huge compartments or holds between the bridge at one end and the engine room at the other.

When train and boat are in position a signal is given; the hopper at the bottom of each truck opens and the ore slides down a chute into the holds of the freighter — one hold and one chute to one truck. In one of the docks there are a hundred of these

chutes on each side of the track. By such colossal but fundamentally simple arrangements thousands of tons of ore can be unloaded into the freighters in times measured in minutes. The record loading was made in 1926 when over a quarter of a million tons were transferred to twenty-six vessels in twenty-four hours.

The ore docks and their operations are the compelling spectacle of Duluth. At the invitation of the Vice-President of the Duluth, Mesabi and Northern Railway I went to see them in operation. Soon after I entered the main gate I came to a level crossing with the warning 'Better to wait at this crossing for ten minutes than a million in the cemetery'; the engineers had made some attempt to calculate the date of the resurrection.

The process of loading the freighters was pleasant to watch because the red ore makes no dust as it slides down the chutes and the machinery itself has the majesty which belongs to multiplied symmetry. One man giving a display of physical jerks looks foolish: mass five hundred men in an arena and turn on the spotlights and the spectacle is impressive.

The harbour, the scene of all this activity, is spread out at the foot of a bluff. Between it and the lake is a narrow peninsula, Minnesota Point, about seven miles long which stretches from the north shore towards a similar one, Wisconsin Point, about

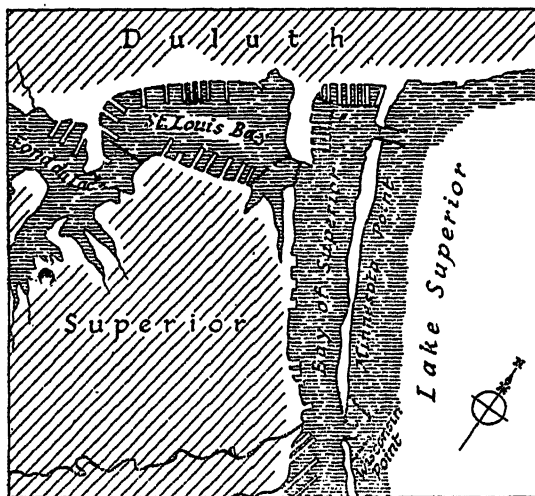


Fig. 14. Duluth Harbour

three miles long extending from the south shore (Fig. 14). Together they form a perfect land-locked basin. Into it flows the River St. Louis which broadens out a few miles from its junction with the lake and thus affords still greater harbour space.

Its defect, which it shares with other

harbours of the Great Lakes, is that it is closed in the winter by ice. The break up of the ice at the end of the long winter is always the cause of much local rejoicing; huge crowds assemble to see the great grey sheets beginning to crumble. To the pioneers, who had no railways, the opening of navigation was an excuse for much unconventional behaviour. One church preserves in its records the story of how, one Sunday morning, towards the close of an otherwise orderly service, the *Keweenaw*, the first boat of the year, blew her whistle. At once the church emptied and the pastor was left to pray to the pews. At the evening service he announced 'Service next Sunday morning at half-past two, Providence permitting and if the whistle of the *Keweenaw* does not blow.'

At the back of the harbour, on the face of the steep bluff which borders the lake, rises the city. The main streets run horizontally parallel to the lake; the others career straight up exceedingly steep slopes. The terracing and the grading of the cliffs, for the formation of these streets, must have been a strenuous and costly enterprise. In fact the removal of superfluous rock has proved so difficult that, in some of the horizontal streets, great cliffs rise up between the houses, dwarfing and apparently threatening them. The ascent from one level to another is sometimes made by flights of wooden steps. As a consequence of the difficulties of the site Duluth has spread out to a length of about twenty-four miles while its width is sometimes less than a mile and never over four.

I have already pointed out that my approach to Duluth was through an almost unbroken expanse of forest, still the home of big game, and that the first railway to this busy centre is younger than I am. Big and important as Duluth now is, it is still on the edge of the wilderness. In the streets I saw more than one hefty lumberman with woollen sweater and buck-skin trousers, and several automobiles carrying canoes. Beyond the utmost verges of the town you may soon be in touch with sylvan glades that lead to the home of deer, bear, moose, beaver, porcupine, mink and fox.

The courteous secretary of the Minnesota Arrowhead Association, Mr. V. Saxby, showed me in his office a vicious looking bob-cat, recently shot on the golf course, and told me of a man

who came home one evening to find his children playing with a bear in the garden. In the local paper, on the first evening of my visit, there was a paragraph about a bear that, at Grand Marais, had made off with feed stored at a lumber mill, torn clothes from a wash line and ripped them into shreds, and raided a hen coop.

In the window of the Hotel Duluth, where I stayed, was a stuffed bear shot in the restaurant as late as 1933. This is the story of its undoing.

Six o'clock in the morning. A crash of glass was heard. The night watchman, thinking there had been a motor smash, rushed out into the street. What he saw was not a car but a huge, black bear raging about in the restaurant trying to follow the tantalising smells leading to the kitchen. The watchman climbed the stairway connecting two levels of the restaurant and hurled a chair at the hairy visitor. Bruin fell but quickly rose again. By this time a crowd of sleepy guests and night revellers, excited by the idea of a bear hunt in a hotel, joined in the fun. One, bolder than the rest, chased the angry beast round the room with a hammer. The bear objected and was about to retaliate when a bullet, fired by a police sergeant who had been summoned by the hotel manager, whistled through the air and put an end to the adventure.

## CHAPTER IX

### HIBBING: THE ORE CAPITAL OF THE WORLD

I was not satisfied with seeing the iron ore shipped: I wanted to see it mined because I knew it was mined in a way unfamiliar in Europe. I was advised to go to Hibbing.

We mounted the steep shoreward-facing cliffs and then, for nearly a hundred miles, crossed land that once was entirely forested but over which all the big timber had been felled by piratical lumber companies. The forest had attempted to reassert itself and there were again many square miles of woodland, mostly clumps of young shrubs or groups of young trees smiling amongst the stumps of their ancestors.

Here and there the woodland was broken by clearings for small farms where the stumps lifted their grey butts amongst oats, potatoes, hay and wheat or in the pastures where cattle grazed. Most of the houses were of wood, some of them of the old-fashioned, unsquared logs. These farms, whose owners make on the whole a poor living, eked out by working in the mines and towns and, especially in winter, in the woods, mark the fourth and last successful exploitation of the Upper Lakes Region.

The undulating road rose gradually. We rumbled up one long easy slope only to see, from the summit, another stretch running ruler-straight away to the top of yet another gentle incline. The hundreds of small lakes which spangle the surface were hidden behind a screen of trees. These trees, mostly black spruce and tamarack, spoke of the presence of peat bogs and swamp. Where the marshy land had been cleared and ploughed the heavy sodden soil was revealed but in many places the ground was carpeted with peat moss.

People left the bus and disappeared down rutty unpaved roads which were as straight as the main highways. Said the driver to one departing passenger, some fifty miles from Duluth, 'I thought you lived in Duluth.'



'No', said the man. 'I work in Duluth but my home's three miles down this road and I'm going there for the week-end.'

'For a rest?'

'No. To cut wood.'

From time to time we stopped for a few minutes at scheduled halts. My companions always precipitately sought the little eating places for refreshments, chiefly coca-cola, coffee, pie and ice cream. One benevolent looking veteran with shaggy locks and long white beard came back with two enormous ice cones, one in each hand, and sampled them alternately with the keen delight of a little schoolboy. Nowhere in the world do people eat as much ice cream as in America and nowhere else in the world is the ice cream so good.

There were no villages and the scene did not change for miles. These continuous views of country which do not vary, hour after hour, mile after mile, cause many Europeans to consider the American landscape, even when it is attractive, rather monotonous. A thousand miles of jagged Matterhorns or of gentle Downs are more than some people can digest at one sitting. Their attitude towards such immense helpings even of pure beauty is that of the Yankee philosopher who remarked that 'Fish and visitors spoil after the third day.' I count myself lucky in that I am never bored. Like Chesterton I can truly say

*When all my days are ending  
And I have no song to sing  
I think I shall not be too old  
To stare at everything.*

All the same I prefer an occasional change of diet and I was grateful when a number of long, treeless, level, red plateaus showed up against the sky line and set me guessing as to what they might be. They were dumps from the mines.

By the time we reached Eveleth (The Hill Top City) we had climbed about a thousand feet and the number of red dumps and other signs of mining had increased, but there was nothing of the unsightliness usually associated with mines, and there were no slums in the mining towns we had reached.

I arrived at Hibbing, the 'ore capital of the world', at lunch time. I ordered a salad and some cheese. The salad filled a huge bowl, the little sister of a washing basin: the cheese — I weighed it with a pocket spring balance — weighed six ounces. It is dangerous to order à la carte portions in many American restaurants: the helpings would discomfort a Goliath.

Overcome by the combination of a heavy lunch and a temperature of 82° F. I spent the afternoon in the cool lounge of the hotel. By six o'clock the temperature had fallen to 72° F. and I actually felt cold. By eight o'clock it had dropped to 64° F. and I went to bed glad of warm blankets. These sudden changes of temperature are common in the inland parts of the continent far away from the sea. It is on record, for instance, that at Amarillo, Texas, the temperature on Feb. 7, 1933, dropped overnight from 64° F. to —6° F. a fall of seventy degrees while one slept. Such changes are trying to the nerves and the constitution.

My proposed visit to the mines was delayed by a Sunday, on which day I explored the town, and by a Monday which was Labour Day — a national holiday. The Local Labour Party announced a round of celebrations beginning with sports at eleven in the morning and ending with a dance at nine in the evening. The item in the programme which most interested me was one timed for half past twelve — 'Basket Lunch at Bennett Park. Coffee and Ice Cream free'. With some idea of what would result in Europe from the free distribution of anything I went to see the fun. When I arrived at the appointed hour there were not more than two hundred people present and not one of them looked as if in search of gratuitous refreshment.

The next day I presented myself at the offices of the Oliver Iron Mining Company and, in accordance with the usual hospitable treatment of the stranger in America, I was put in charge of the Chief Engineer and taken to see the mine — a deep, elongated hole in the ground (Fig. 15). As I stood on the edge of this colossal excavation, from which more than twelve million tons of ore have been shipped in a working year of eight months. I was reminded of the Grand Canyon I had seen some years before and meant to see again. Before me, deep into the earth, descended terraces of russet, rich red, dark brown, purple, blue-black and

ochre yellow rocks. It seemed almost impossible to believe that man had actually first with hand- and then with power-shovels created this gigantic slit in the earth's crust. It is now two and a half miles long and from half a mile to a mile wide and, at one spot, three hundred and fifty feet deep. Since 1895 more material has been removed than in the digging of the Panama Canal.

The first mineral hunters in this region came in a typical rush for gold, but found only 'fool's gold', that is, iron pyrites. In time most of them trickled sadly back over the rough trails through the forests. But one of them, a woodsman named Merrit, found some red iron ore, realised its value, took a packet home and

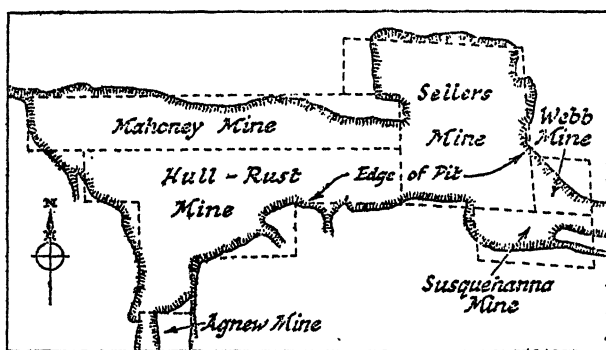


Fig. 15. The Mines at Hibbing

taught its value to his sons. The boys grew up, acquired fame as woodsmen, saved their money and, after twenty years of forest toil, retired from the timber business to begin their search for iron.

They were joined by their nephews. The 'Seven Iron Men', as they were later called, surveyed and mapped the vast area north of Duluth. Part of the district they so thoroughly explored is known as the Mesabi Range. The term 'range', be it noted, is used technically, not for 'hills' which they may or may not be, but for any district where the deposits of iron ore are sufficiently concentrated and lie near enough to the surface to be profitably mined.

The peculiarity of the Mesabi Range is that at certain points the glacial drift, which four successive invasions of ice from

Canada had pushed on top of the ore deposits, was so thin that it could simply be shovelled out of the way, and much of the ore itself was so soft that it, too, could easily be removed by shovels. There was no need to sink shafts. The mining is carried on under the heavens, not under the earth, and the pit at Hibbing is the world's largest open-pit iron mine.

By means of steep wooden steps we went down through the upper layer of glacial drift where great rounded boulders are stuffed into the clay like raisins in a pudding. Just below us were men drilling a hole in one of the occasional hard layers preparatory to blasting. While the blasting is in process the workmen take shelter in yellow-painted pillar boxes with cone-shaped tops. When the blasting was over the broken material would be removed by power-shovels. At other points I saw the shovels at work, lifting twenty tons at a time as easily as a child digging sand on a shore and dumping them into steel cars each of which held seventy-five tons. Viewed from above the big arm swinging a shovel had the slow sweeping movement of an elephant's trunk; the transportable wheeled engine-houses were no bigger than bathing huts: the labourers no larger than flies.

The long procession of huge ore wagons, looking however like toy trains, mounted to the surface by tracks, of which there are seventy miles, in a series of steep zigzags and spirals. As different parts of the mine are excavated these tracks are moved and relaid by titanic cranes which handle them, seemingly as gently as a mother handles a child. To fasten them down again a gasoline engine driving an air compressor operates like a pneumatic riveting hammer.

The drift is carried away to form hills: the ore with less than fifty per cent of iron in it is also cast aside to build yet other hills. These hills are smoothed out by a kind of gigantic scythe, which levels off a swath twenty-two feet wide to the side of the track at one sweep.

The operations of this stupendous exhibition of human activity do not consist solely in loading cars and dumping refuse. There are elaborate processes of analysing, grading and weighing which result in the blending of ores to such a degree of accuracy that any particular blast furnace, anywhere in the world, can depend

on receiving just the kind of ore needed to produce a certain grade of pig-iron, with as much assurance as a man ordering any well-known brand of tea or tobacco in a shop.

In the course of time the mine grew wider and wider at the top until it reached and surrounded the town of Hibbing on three sides. How to extract the ore from under the town presented a new problem. It was tackled in the same spectacular fashion as the mine itself. The Oliver Iron Mining Company bought forty acres of the town site, and at once began to move the wooden houses and buildings to another site a mile and a half to the south. Brick buildings were wrecked where they stood.

During the moving period it was a common sight, night and day, to see two, three or even four buildings on wheels being towed towards new foundations that were already awaiting them. Some of the occupants remained at home all the time, the fires alight and the chimneys smoking. Churches with their spires, pews and decorations all intact and with the sexton at the door were amongst the most striking features of the cavalcade. Buildings which were far too large to be moved in this way had to be cut into suitably sized slices. The cemetery was 'reverently scooped up with steam shovels' and its tenants given another resting place.

The new Hibbing has never been incorporated as a 'city': it remains, for administrative purposes, a 'village', though it has a population of close on 20,000. I don't understand exactly what this means but one result of it is that the owners of the mines are forced to pay practically all the taxes.

The population of the village includes representatives of forty-four different nationalities. From Europe have come British, Swedes, Finns, Italians and various Balkan peoples, from the New World men of every state in the Union, Canada, Mexico and South America. Even lonely Iceland, far-away Australia and China have dropped their contribution into the Hibbing cauldron. Such facts may be of interest to those amongst us who think that America is peopled by men of British blood and therefore our natural ally.

As I made so much use of buses on this North American excursion I cannot omit to mention the fact that Hibbing was the home

of the founder of the present wide-spread Greyhound bus system and the headquarters of the first motor-bus route outside New York City. From a humble beginning, with one touring car, the Greyhound system has grown until it covers the continent with a transport network unequalled in any other part of the world.

I should not like to live in Hibbing. Its climate is not all that a man of free choice would select. Its distance from the sea is responsible for extremes of temperature. In front of the Memorial Hall, the summer climate is indicated by a variation of the usual grass prohibition which runs 'Please give the grass a chance'. The winter climate is indicated by a notice at the side of a piece of waste ground, on the edge of the village, — 'Dump Snow Only'. Snow needs a wide dumping area when it is piled, as it sometimes is, so high along the side walks that the tops of the taxis in the cleared streets are not visible from the doorsteps of the house.

And now for that reference back to Pigeon River of which I spoke on page 80. The Arrowhead country, in which the fabulously rich iron ranges lie, was once under the sovereignty of Britain, but British rule ended with the Treaty of Paris in 1783. In fixing, theoretically, the new boundary between Canada and the United States, the only map available (Fig. 16) was one made by John Mitchell over a quarter of a century before. Mitchell was a London physician, a naturalist, and an authority on the opossum but a very bad cartographer.

The boundary line to be, based on this map, was described as running 'through Lake Superior and northward of the isles Royal and Phellipeaux, to the Long Lake; thence through the middle of said Long Lake, and the water communication between it and the Lake of the Woods'. Neither the signers of the Treaty of Paris nor any one else knew how crude and imperfect was the map with which they were working. They thought Pigeon River was the outlet of the Lake of the Woods whereas its source is over two hundred miles east of that lake. Moreover, they believed, on the evidence of the Mitchell map, that the source of the Great Lakes system of waterways was the Lake of the Woods whereas it is the St. Louis River. Had they known what we know they would almost certainly have placed the international boundary along the River St. Louis and not along Pigeon River and the unknown

richest iron ore region in the world would have been in Canada and not in the United States!

I may add that there is no Long Lake, that the Isle Phellipeaux does not exist and that there are many more than twelve islands

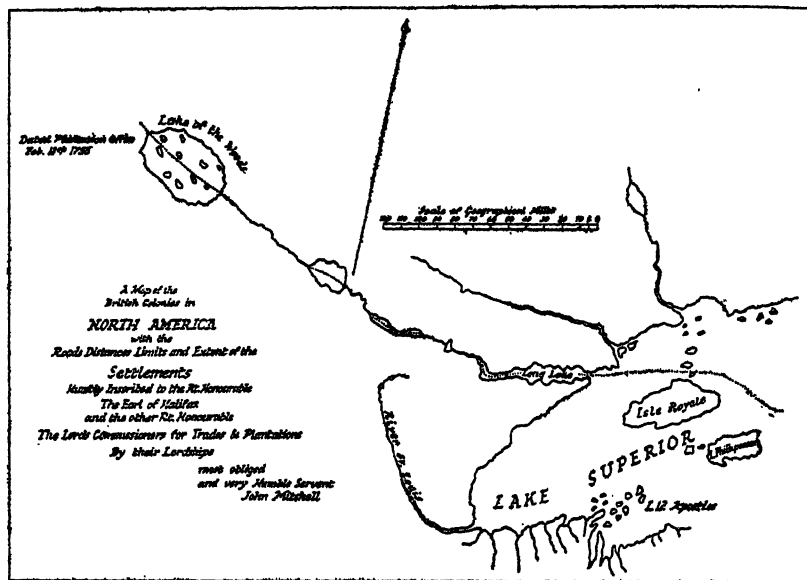


Fig. 16. Mitchell's Survey

in the Apostles group. As a result of all this confusion the line laid down by the Treaty of Paris could not be marked on the ground, and it was not till 1842 that the existing boundary was delimited.

## CHAPTER X

### THE SOURCE OF THE MISSISSIPPI

MY next objective was Lake Itasca, the source of the Mississippi. So far as bus routes were concerned I could have gone direct from Hibbing but, as the bank at Hibbing would not give me any money on my letter of credit nor change my English Traveller's Cheques because the outbreak of war had made the currency value so indefinite, I had to go back to Duluth where my bank had a branch.

When the porter was putting the passengers' luggage on the bus he picked up a small case belonging to a young woman, found it heavier than he expected, winked at me and murmured 'Books. She's a school teacher.' When he picked up the smallest of mine he found it still heavier, looked at me and gasped 'And you?'

'I'm a writer. That case is half full of papers. I'm collecting facts.'

'So? I thought maybe you was collectin' rocks.'

As the journey from Duluth to Lake Itasca was again through part of the Upper Lake Region, we again undulated through areas of second growth and tiny clearings but we saw far more lakes. Minnesota calls itself the 'Land of Ten Thousand Lakes'; as a matter of fact there are eleven thousand. They lie in hollows scooped out by ancient glaciers or in valleys dammed by glacial debris. A large scale map of the state is so bewilderingly filled with azure patches as fully to justify the name — *Minne-Sota* — 'Land of Skytinted Water'.

Out of these lakes slide or tumble placid or turbulent streams; round them lie deep forests; by the sides of many of them are cabins for holiday makers. There are, however, hundreds which have never yet been reached or named: they have been seen and mapped only from the air. Those that are known and are accessible are a paradise for the angler.



*He riseth up early in the morning,  
He disturbeth the whole household.  
Great are his preparations.  
And he goeth forth, full of hope,  
And, in the evening he returneth  
Smelling of strong drink, and  
The truth is not in him.*

A little while before I reached my destination the light failed. Night crept out of the forest like a black cat. Wrapped in the skirts of the darkness I was conscious only of tall trees and dark waters till we drew up at the entrance to Douglas Lodge, the only hotel in Itasca State Park. The park is another of those great national playgrounds set apart to preserve for ever, in a *primaeval* condition, their flora, fauna and other natural features, yet made accessible by foot-trails and stream-ways. A small part of most of such areas is opened up for concentrated use and here visitors can lodge or camp and park their cars and trailers.

I took up my residence in one of the cabins attached to the state-owned hotel, Douglas Lodge. The plan of a central hotel surrounded by independent cabins, cottages and bungalows is common all over America not only in large national parks but even in extensive private grounds in the big cities. The cabin allotted to me in Itasca State Park was a typical one, simply but delightfully furnished, and so placed on the edge of the lake as to be apparently quite private. With the aid of a flash lamp I made my way to it along a narrow trail cushioned with pine needles. It was too dark to see anything distinctly and as quiet as an unspoken thought. The very stillness kept me long awake and I was abroad before dawn, a most unusual occurrence for me, to watch the last traces of the dying night creep out of their dusky sanctuaries beneath the widespread branches of the trees.

In my little cottage, with nothing in front of it to hide the beautiful blue water nestling deep within a fringe of mammoth pines, I lived alone for a week. During the day-time I wandered along forest trails: sometimes these were clear enough but sometimes they could be followed only by marks on the trees and I stumbled through undergrowth and over fallen timber.

I learned, from one of the rangers, how to distinguish the narrow paths by which the deer came down to drink in front of my cottage every evening when the world went strangely silent, marking the passing of the day; to tell where the beavers had been at work making a most unpleasant litter; to find their 'lodges' which looked equally untidy; to note the differences between the Norwegian pines whose copper stems are fiery pillars at sunset, and the white pines whose stems are black, not white; and to pick out the bright green, short-needed tamaracks which grew in the swamps. Wild asters flourished in the open spaces; birch trees flashed a silvery joyfulness amongst the darker timber; pine needles made a carpet for the feet and ferns flourished luxuriantly in cool and shady places. I grew to keen appreciation of the call of the bird, of the call of the wind as it set the myriad branches dancing with glee, and of the magic hush which rained down into the shadows when the night clothed itself once more with the serenity of peace.

It was more difficult to see the animals than the trees because they usually hid at the sound of my footfall. The deer, which came to quench their thirst almost at my doorstep, fled at the slightest noise. I found a porcupine but it was dead, killed by a passing car: over it bent a single tall sunflower wondering what had happened. Ground hogs were common enough; they eyed me with suspicion as they sat at the entrances to their burrows ready to bolt into the ground if unduly alarmed. Squirrels, grey, red and brown scampered and frolicked up stems and along branches to safe retreats whence they watched me with their knowing eyes. One night, as I was coming along the only road in a car, five pairs of green eyes glared at me seeming to dare me to try to pass, but they belonged to five raccoons, quite fearless or unaware of their danger, who were playing with each other on the highway. I once saw two bears, hesitated, remembered stories of escaping by climbing trees, looked for the right tree, crept close amongst the bushes, got uncomfortably near the bears and then found they were securely defended from me by a big, wire enclosure.

The days were cool but sunny; the nights were cold enough for fires and blankets. The early mornings were much like those in

early spring in England when there is a tang in the air which produces sudden resolutions to do things and gives the energy to make a start.

I think my happiest moments were those when I sat on the porch of my log cabin and watched the day go into hiding. The deserted little, white, wooden pier and a few canoes drawn up on the sandy beach were the only hints of the presence of man. Of other men except myself or other habitation except my own there was not the slightest glimpse. It was as lonely as a desert and it all belonged to me. Yet, near at hand, in hotel and cottage, were all the comforts for which I could reasonably wish, a fact which added much to my sense of contentment. It is much easier to be philosophical, charitable and tolerant when you know that hunger cannot gnaw at your vitals.

In such a place, especially under the haunting influence of twilight, come thoughts that rarely, if ever, visit you in the talking company of your fellow-men. Man cannot live without dreaming and here, in a solitude designed for dreams, the dreaming was undisturbed. It felt good to be able to live, even if it were but for a little while, where changes were so slow as not to count, where it appeared to matter so little who ran the rest of the world. Never, in all time, would these hundreds of shining lakes and these acres of rock-strewn forest ever become the prey of the enterprising industrialist in search of profits or of the impertinent enthusiasms of the landscape gardener improving Nature.

I suppose if a man lived long enough in such an environment he would become one with Nature herself. The fall of the night, the light of dawn piloting the rising of the sun, the whistling arrows of the gale would become a part of him and he would be for ever at rest, his days unrippled by any social, economic or international problems.

I asked myself every day — shall I stay here for the few years that possibly lie ahead of me or shall I seek some other sanctuary, some other haven of peaceful delight elsewhere? I argued that one does not always eat of the same dish, however pleasing to the palate: perhaps the soul, like the body, needs a change of diet. Moreover, whether I liked it or not, I had soon to move. Autumn was just beginning; the sumach, the earliest plant to herald the

coming of winter, was burning its finger-tips; the holiday season was almost over and the lodge was about to close. Only a few more days were left to me to roam the trails and achieve my special object of saluting the source of the Mississippi.

I could have reached it, from Douglas Lodge, by a good motor road but that seemed unromantic. Instead, I followed a narrow trail under the grateful shade of pine and cedar, of spruce and balsam, of maple and aspen. America is said to have no more frontiers and to offer no more opportunities of pioneering, but as I tramped the sandy path between a sea of boulders, wound round the edge of the silent, sparkling blue waters, or trudged over boggy earth where rotting tree trunks gave a doubtful footing, I felt something of the spirit of those who first wandered in these woods when, in the absence of all trails and modern conveniences, they valiantly challenged the unknown.

At the end of a tunnel of foliage I came to a tiny rivulet, so quiet it seemed hardly to move, and crossed by a few stepping stones. On the other side rose a tall column on which was inscribed: 'Here, 1475 feet above the ocean the mighty Mississippi begins to flow on its winding way of 2552 miles to the Gulf of Mexico.' I had reached the official source of the Mississippi. But is it really the source?

From time to time there has been some dispute on this question and, if I had to settle it, I should not put the source of the Father of Waters exactly at this spot. Lake Itasca lies in an undulating glacial moraine which contains numerous other lakes, streams and springs whose drainage it receives. For instance, by means of a narrow creek, a few yards long, Chambers Creek, it drains a big lake, Lake Elk, which in its turn receives yet other streams, and it seems to me that the true source of the Mississippi is at the head of the longest river draining into Elk Lake (Fig. 17).

Besides, I should not wish to deprive Elk Lake of a claim given to it by Indian legend. According to a story of Chippewa origin a mammoth elk once reigned supreme over the whole district. Every year the animals of the north came to visit him, to consult him about the future and drink of the waters which gave them protection against famine, accident and disease. One day, however, a party of Indian hunters, gigantic of stature, arrived from

the south and, with poisoned arrows, destroyed King Elk. The heavens were immediately covered with clouds, the wind hissed and writhed through the forest, and rain descended in such

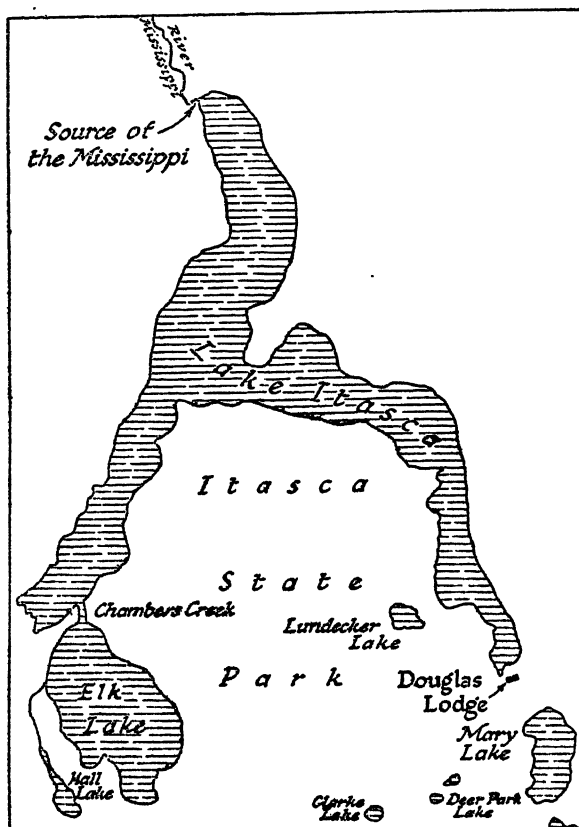


Fig. 17. Lake Itasca

volume as to fill all the lakes to overflowing and gave rise to a river which found its grave in the sea.

But since the mineralogist Henry Schoolcraft, in 1832, discovered the outlet from Lake Itasca, at the spot where I was standing, this point of departure of the collected waters of the basin has been officially recognised as the source of the Mississippi. Schoolcraft paddled up the lake, landed on an island, raised the American flag and to the lake gave, so say some, its

present name derived from three syllables of the Latin words '*Veritas caput*', the 'true head'. There are others, and I cannot argue the matter, who say that the word is the name of the beautiful daughter, Itasca or I-tes-ka, of Hiawatha. She was carried to the underworld by its ruler Chebiabo and, as she descended into the regions of darkness, she shed tears which united with the waters of spring and rivulet to set the Mississippi flowing.

I sat down near this romantic spot, the air full of the invigorating smell of the pines, to eat my lunch: flies and mosquitoes took theirs at the same time to the sound of much merry music of their own making. I looked at the baby river, a few inches deep and a few feet wide, giving no visible promise of becoming the giant whose arteries carry the life blood of the vast agricultural storehouses of the Middle West. This is just as it should be: all beginnings are weak. This one was so weak that the next night some beavers built a dam across it and separated the infant from its mother, a supreme example of colossal impertinence.

When I left England I had intended to travel entirely by water up the St. Lawrence and through the Great Lakes to Duluth, but shipping laws and interests prevented me from doing anything of the sort. I had also intended to follow the Mississippi from its source to its mouth and, as far as possible, to follow it in a boat. Well here I was at the source and, according to the information on the pillar, had only 2552 miles to go.

A derelict canoe, rotting in some willows on the further bank, reminded me that it was possible to launch such a frail craft quite near my feet and, with many laborious portages, make my way across treacherous lakes, between swamps, and down or round rapids and so perform a perilous and strenuous trip as far as Minneapolis where real navigation can begin. Such a journey has been made more than once. It has far more often been attempted and abandoned.

I knew it would be useless for me to try. I could not canoe and I was too old to learn. If any one with sufficient youth, skill and strength had offered me a passage I should have accepted the offer at once and, as I now know, been sorry ever after.

There were, however, other possible ways of obtaining an intimate acquaintance with the river. I might hire a car and see the

Mississippi at every point where it was crossed by a bridge or paralleled by a road, but I am no more efficient in a car than I am in a canoe. I might walk, for time was of no importance, but the distances between beds would often be excessive, especially for one carrying a necessarily heavy ruck-sac. The only practicable thing to do was to take once more to the bus and, with frequent halts for inspection, to go down the valley to some point where I could obtain a passage in a boat.

PART III  
THE RIVER MISSISSIPPI

CHAPTER XI

LAKE ITASCA TO MINNEAPOLIS

My first halt, after leaving Douglas Lodge, was at Bemidji, thirty-one miles to the north; the Mississippi, one of the biggest wrigglers on earth, begins its way to the south by going in exactly the opposite direction. It enters Lake Bemidji by a channel only a few yards long which connects it with another lake whose name I did not know. I asked a railway employee what the name might be. He replied 'I've forgotten but I know it's the name of some Indian god.' I afterwards learned that it is called Lake Irving. The outlet from Lake Irving was marked by a long row of posts, on each one of which sat a mallard duck sleepily keeping watch over a stream so sleepy that I could not see it move.

The thriving little town of Bemidji, once one of the most lawless of lumber camps, is now a trade centre, with an active dairy industry on the clearings which have been made in the forest. There are still industries connected with timber but the lumber industry, as such, is dead. All the available big timber was cut long ago and the nearest logging camp is at least fifty miles away. There is, however, sufficient timber still left to provide a suitable side-line for a man who wishes to begin farming. In fact, at Bemidji, as in so many other towns in the Upper Lake Region, there is a forest view at the end of almost every street.

The main claim of Bemidji to popular fame is as a summer resort for those who would fish, boat or idle on the shores of the beautiful lake, shores once buffeted by rafts of logs and trampled by swampers but now neat and tidy with parks and gardens. It is attractively situated near the heart of the big wilderness and has, by way of advertisement, called this extensive area of clear lakes, lonely forests and Indian Reservations, this haunt of anglers and hunters — Paul Bunyan's Playground.

Paul, though a romancer, was no relation of the creator of *Pilgrim's Progress*, but a mythical figure, the only one which



white America has produced. He was the greatest logger and the biggest liar who ever lived. In every lumbercamp his name is the father of every exaggeration of any magnitude.

Paul's constant companion was a big blue ox called Blue Babe. It was as strong as a locomotive. If a logging road were crooked, Paul hitched the Babe to one end of it and Babe would straighten it out. Unfortunately he could never be kept more than one night at any camp because, in one day, he could eat all the feed any crew could bring to the camp in a year. For a snack between meals he would eat fifty bales of hay, wire and all, and six men were constantly employed picking the wire out of his teeth.

Babe was gentle but mischievous. He would upset the weather by licking all the nicest clouds out of shape. He would creep up to a river where men were driving logs, drink all the water and leave the logs high and dry. Every now and then he would run away, making tracks so deep that a long rope was needed to haul out any one who fell into them. Once a settler with his wife and baby tumbled into one of the tracks and the son was fifty-six years of age when he escaped from the hole to report the accident. These tracks form the depressions in which lie the thousands of lakes in Minnesota: the glaciers had nothing to do with them! And it was Blue Babe who, by tipping over his water-tank, created Lake Itasca and the Mississippi River.

The deeds of Paul were equally stupendous. He used to make torches of pine trees, set them alight and toss them into the hills to melt the snow and so provide the water needed for his log drives. He climbed offending water-spouts and turned them off. On one hunting trip he killed a hundred and forty-seven ducks, each of which weighed, on an average, a little over a ton and a half. One of his lumber crew was employed to keep his pipe filled and when the pipe was drawing well the clouds rising from the bowl were as those from a forest fire.

Of these stories there are scores, but I had no time to listen to more of them. I was anxious to begin my exploration of the upper course of the river. I did not expect any spectacular scenery. The upper course is laid in a region of lakes and marshes. As far as Minneapolis its valley is shallow and its bed is in a glacial deposit into which it has not deeply cut.

After the Mississippi enters Lake Bemidji its channel still runs north as far as Diamond Point on the western side of the lake. This is the most northerly point of the river's course. The channel

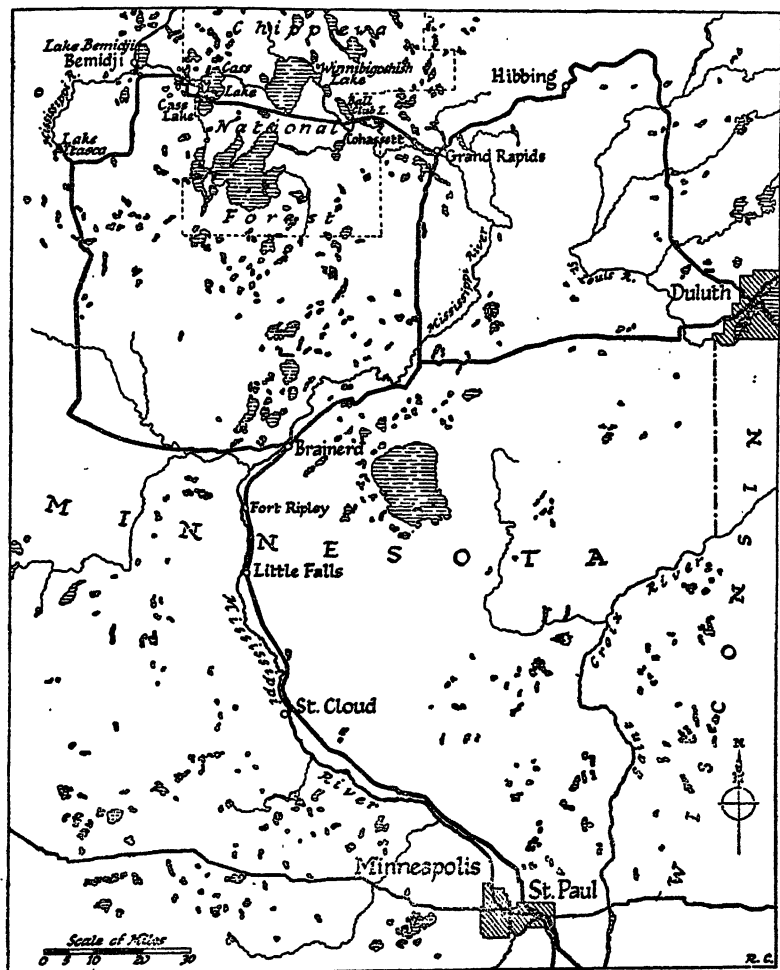


Fig. 18. Lake Itasca to Minneapolis

then swings across the lake to the east and leaves by a small outlet. I wanted to see that outlet. It was only four and a half miles away but the day was too hot for walking. At the hotel I talked the matter over with one of the bell-boys, a young man of twenty-

four who had passed through the local High School and qualified for admission to the State University but had entered the state of matrimony instead.

He asked the manager of the hotel for half a day's holiday without pay and, in his own car, drove me according to my directions. I knew more about the country from a study of the map than he did from personal experience though he had spent all his life there.

We found the exit from Lake Bemidji easily enough. It was another short, shallow, narrow channel rimmed with trees and rushes. From this point the Mississippi, not yet having made up its mind by which way it wanted to go home, took a turn to the east, that is, in a generally easterly direction: you can never forecast its actual direction any farther than you can see it. We followed an easterly road and met the river again where it was blocked by a dam built in connection with the provision of electric power for Bemidji. Above the dam the river was a beautiful stretch of tree-rimmed water: below there was an almost empty rocky valley; little water was passing. According to the engineer the river, for two years, had been so low that no water had been spilled during the whole of that period. The drop, at this point, was twenty-two feet. I asked the engineer how canoeists starting down the Mississippi from Lake Itasca managed to pass the dam.

'By portage', said he.

This unloading of a canoe and carrying it and all it contains to some other point where it can again be launched entails great labour and often great hardship as well. If you are young and strong and the day be young and fresh it can be great fun — the first time.

By roundabout roads we next found the Mississippi at its exit from the big Cass Lake: the entry of the river into the lake is not accessible by road. At the exit there is another dam, built to maintain the level of the lake. It is a slender structure of round, brown, water-polished tree trunks over which the stream slides in quiet silkiness. The drop is only about two or three feet but canoes cannot pass and a second portage becomes necessary only a mile or two from the first — not so much fun this time!

The river next flows by a narrow rushy channel, infested with

mosquitoes, into a shallow mud-bottomed lake whose name is spelled Winnibigoshish but is pronounced Winni-by-gosh. By this time it was growing dark so we returned to Bemidji. I had driven about fifty miles. For this the bell-boy charged me three dollars and lost his afternoon's wages into the bargain. I protested at the smallness of the account. 'I couldn't charge you any more', he said, 'because I've enjoyed the trip so much. I never knew before that the Mississippi went these ways.'

In the evening, strolling about the neon-lighted streets, I saw a bright clean building labelled 'Liquor Store', and entered. I sat down at a little table and examined the list of beverages. I hesitated between a *Pink Lady*, a *Gin Buck*, a *Happy Dream* and a *Sky Ride*. But when I learned that the *Pink Lady* was compounded of gin, crème de cacao, lemon, sugar, cream and the white of an egg I neglected both her and her companions, mounted a stool at the bar and called for a 'straight drink' of Scotch. The bar-tender handed me the bottle and a measure and asked me to pour out my own drink. In answer to my question for the reason for this procedure he explained that if he poured out drinks for Americans himself, his customers would turn their backs on him and walk out.

Next day the heat was terrific. The bus was said to be air-conditioned but the condition of the air inside the bus, except when the motion was rapid, was that of an oven. The cattle in the clearings were so limp that, unlike some of my companions, they declined to chew their cud.

Eighteen miles east of Bemidji we entered the hilly, wooded country of the Chippewa National Forest where large areas of barren land have replaced what were once considered inexhaustible sources of timber. Much of this land is, however, now being re-afforested.

On the western edge of the forest is the village of Cass Lake, the headquarters of the Chippewa Agencies in the Chippewa Indian Reservation. There were, naturally, many Indians in the streets. Contrary to common opinion the Indians in the United States are not vanishing, though there are not so many now as in the days of Columbus. It has been estimated that in his day there were approximately 846,000. By 1900, owing to a variety

of causes — disease, alcohol, war — the number had dropped to 270,000 but this decline stopped during the second half of the century. Since then there has been first a slow and then a rapid increase. To-day there are about 342,000 about half of whom are full-blooded. They are grouped in 200 distinct tribes most of whom live west of the Mississippi and are wards of the Federal Government. They occupy for the most part lands, often very poor lands, specially set aside for them.

I carried in my mind a picture, acquired in my boyhood reading, of feather-crowned, tomahawk-waving braves dwelling in painted tipis on the shore of the lake. I saw no tipis at Cass Lake, though I believe they are still in use, only rather squalid shacks, and the Indians in the streets were dressed much like other Americans, though some of the older women, fat and sweaty, wore two long black plaits of hair and most of them were not well washed. The younger women in bright pink frocks showed more colour and more gaiety. Like their white sisters they had adopted lip-stick and rouge thereby making a partial return to the barbaric adornments which distinguished their ancestors. Old and young drove the most ancient of rusty cars which, when in motion, gave out ear-splitting noises resembling those of a truck load of empty biscuits tins.

Cass Lake has at least one story worth repeating. When the bishop who founded the mission for the Chippewa first came to the village he asked the chief if he might safely leave his luggage there. 'Certainly', said the chief, 'there is no other white man in this part of the country.'

About one mile west of Ball Club Lake, so called by the Indians because the lake has the form of a lacrosse racquet, we crossed the Mississippi and I left the bus. The river was intricately meandering between low and marshy banks, its shallow streams moving slowly as if already tired. The dull green flats with their muddy edges were an unlovely sight. When the bus had disappeared I was left all alone in uninterrupted wastes of marsh and sedge. The silence was magnificent, so intense that the cries of the ducks and the booming of the mosquitoes did little more than make tiny holes in it.

As I trudged along the empty road, weary and wilted, I saw a

sign in the distance, painted in very big letters 'Shady Rest'. When I reached it I found underneath, in very tiny letters, '8 miles'. A little farther on I came to an old wooden house, marred by scars and wounds, bestowed by time and rough treatment, and sat on the edge of its rotting verandah. Presently a man clad in a weatherbeaten shirt and much patched dungarees came out of another cottage and sat on a log close at hand. We talked. I always talk to strangers in unfamiliar places.

James Howell, who wrote *Instructions for Foreign Travel* (1642), the first handbook to the continent of Europe, says of the traveller: 'He may converse with merchants . . . and in a short time one may suck out of them what they have been many years a-getting', which puts a simple truth rather coarsely. Every fresh human contact offers an opportunity to climb out of one's own groove and to look down into that of someone else: you do not see a country if you do not meet its people. 'There you sit', Harry Lauder used to say to his audiences, 'been side by side for two hours and not one of you spoke to the fellow in the next seat!' To understand America you have to learn to speak to the fellow in the next seat.

The man who had joined me on the edge of the tiny village was not American born, as was evident by his speech, but I hesitated to ask him what was his nationality: he might have been a German with relatives fighting mine and still German in his sympathies. In many parts of America people of common ancestry sometimes tend to cling together, read and speak their home-land tongue and teach it to their children. Old ties die hard: the passage of former idealisms and the formation of new sympathies is often slow where there is much segregation.

I asked my fellow idler by the roadside about the Indians amongst whom he lived. We had to talk about something and a group of Indian children, just leaving school and hurrying to the waiting School Bus, decided the topic. He spoke highly of the farming and intelligence of the few but was contemptuous of the mass. Most of them were fit, according to him, only for the collection of wild rice in the swamps: all they had to do was to push out in a boat, knock the heads off the rice, one at a time, and then sell the harvest for eleven cents a pound.

each day. Every mornin' he takes the temperatoor of the water and similar other useful facts and mails 'em to his boss. When he's told he opens and shuts the gates to order, but the water's been so low for so long, his orders don't change much. Of course he has to mow the lawn but he'd have to do that at home — for nothin'. Sometimes some of his bosses comes down fishin' and then he works more for he does cookin' and cleanin' for 'em. But of course he's paid extra for that.'

His information was sprinkled with a lot of words having a family relationship to the subject under discussion but these I have omitted.

Below the dam was a chained boom of logs across the river. 'How do canoes get past the dam and the boom?' I asked.

'They portages.'

Not more than another mile away there was another boom and another portage.

We parted in the evening at Grand Rapids where the river was again dammed to supply power to a paper-mill. As usual, where the river is dammed in flattish country, it has expanded to form a large lake. The lake was choked with thousands of logs. The banks were hills of logs. Big shell-shaped shovels scooped up a score or more logs at a single bite and then put them on belt conveyors which carried them into the factory.

I wandered, by permission, in the factory yard, ankle deep in sawdust, taking photographs much to the amusement of some workmen who could see nothing picturesque or unusual in piles of pulp wood, a log-encumbered river or machines playing with logs as a child might play with matches.

Below the dam there was much less noise and bustle: crickets, sawing out their usual music, were the only noisy things. Great bunches of scarlet berries flamed the coming of winter: big trees on undulating slopes made me think of an English park: reeds and willows of an English stream.

The movement of the river was still slow. In its winding course of 175 miles to Grand Rapids it had dropped only 150 feet: in the next 175 miles, to Brainerd (52 miles by road), it would fall another 150 feet. The rate of descent for at least 350 miles is fairly uniform.

For companion in the bus which took me to Brainerd I had a man who came from Iowa. He made scornful remarks about the soil and the crops, especially about the corn, of Minnesota. In Iowa corn grew eight to ten feet high: here it was never more than four feet high and often much less. He talked of pigs, pointed out to me the ricks of wild hay which would keep cattle from starvation in the winter but would not help to produce milk, pointed out also the little, dark brown sheaves of flax grown for seed and not for fibre, and the flatness of the land which gave rise to flooding because the dams would not let the water run away quickly enough.

Brainerd had more booms, more logs, another paper-mill and, for the canoeist, another portage. The Mississippi was now beginning to look like a real river quite different from the dismal thread of the upper marshes. It was wider, and its banks, clothed with spruce and hemlock, were higher. On the edge of the bluff on which the town is built is a park with a municipal tourist camping ground which must be one of the most up-to-date in the whole country. It was provided with stand-pipes for water, plugs for electric light and heat. Under the pines were tables, each of which had a gas-cooker with a movable wind-shield to protect the flame. The charge for a cabin with all these facilities was as low as fifty cents a night. If I were a dictator what would I not do with the parks round London!

Later on the same day, I made another halt at Fort Ripley where a young man told me that to reach the river I must go straight ahead in a direction he indicated. I was beaten by pig-styes and wire fences. Then a cheery young woman who 'taught school' told me to go back about a mile down the highway where there was a tourist camp with a view of the stream. The camp, she said, was called 'Elm Resort' and I asked myself — why *elms*? I looked about me. There were elms in plenty and there were no conifers.

Minnesota, as far as its trees are concerned, is roughly divisible into two districts. In the north pine, balsam, cedar and spruce predominate; in the south maple, elm, hickory and willow. I had crossed the vegetation boundary without noticing it, for the road ran through much cleared land.



Evening brought me to Little Falls, the geographic centre of Minnesota. It is principally a dairying and agricultural centre but has a variety of small industries supplied with cheap power from a dam which has destroyed the falls and converted the river above it into a beautiful lake, seven miles long. Very little water was coming over the dam and I went down into the almost dry bed of the river to see the 'Painted Rocks' of the early French explorers. On my return I saw a big board marked 'Danger. Keep out of the river below the dam. Gates may be opened and water flood the channel at any time.'

I could not leave Little Falls without a visit to the Lindbergh State Park. I kept to the river bank down stream for about two miles. The Mississippi, rapidly widening and filling on its southern march, was now a noble stream between heavily embowered banks. I found the park and in it the house where the famous aviator spent his boyhood. But what interested me most was the little wood-burning fire-places or stoves provided by the park authorities for campers and picnic parties.

The stove was an iron box with one end and the bottom open. The other three sides were iron plates; the top was a series of iron bars. It was placed on a concrete floor and could be turned round to meet wind conditions. By its side was a low, solid, wooden chair, with the seat about a foot above the ground, for the use of the cook. Parks in America, as I have said before, are intended to be used.

A long ride over miles of land as flat as that of the Fens in eastern England but bounded in the distance by low-looking hills, and I was at St. Cloud. In the fifties and sixties, St. Cloud was near to what was then the head of navigation on the Upper Mississippi and the surrounding country was forested. It functioned as an outfitting post for the fur trade where steamers unloaded supplies for forts in the wildernesses and even for the distant Canadian posts of the Hudson's Bay Company.

The town is situated high up above the banks of the river on a level tract surrounded by wooded hills. The Mississippi, here containing a number of beautiful islands, flows through the eastern part of the town at the foot of a bluff crowned by a tiny park. In a temperature of over ninety I crawled into this park seeking

shade and a view of the river, but from where I sat my outlook was bounded by two iron bridges of less than no beauty. A steep flight of wooden steps led from the bluff to the water, but it was in bad condition as if little used and I stayed where I was.

And as I rested I asked myself 'What on earth am I doing in this little town in a heat that is qualifying me for the companionship of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego? All that the Mississippi has to show me here is what I've been seeing for the last two hundred and fifty miles, and St. Cloud is bound to be exactly like all the other little towns with which I am already familiar. St. Cloud is a mistake. Catch the next bus and get out of it!' Then my tourist conscience pricked me saying 'You must at least take a look at the main street.' I grumbled but I went.

Architecturally it was the street I was beginning to know all too well, but nearly all the names over the shops were Polish, German or Scandinavian, those of the Poles being in the majority. The Poles segregate themselves in the western half of the town and maintain, like the Germans and the Scandinavians, many of their old national and religious feasts and customs.

I went into the office of the Chamber of Commerce. 'Can you tell me anything about St. Cloud? I am going to write a book about North America. Ought I to put anything in it about this city?'

'Well we call it the Granite City.'

'That surprises me. I've just come up the main street and all the shops and houses seemed to me to be of wood and bricks.'

'True, but we have vast deposits of granite in and round the city; all colours from near white to jet black, red, pink, grey, twenty of them.'

'But what do you do with it?'

'Do with it? Why, sir, we export some of it for building and we make funeral monuments out of it. You can put in your book that we have the largest manufacture of funeral monuments in the world!'

I then told the courteous secretary I was trying to go down the Mississippi by water and asked his advice. He agreed that canoeing was more like real hard work than fun and suggested that, lower down, there were barge-owners who might defy the law forbidding them to carry passengers and put me on the pay-roll.

'And of course', he added, 'there'd be no difficulty if you had a friend who owned any kind of freight boat because he could, legally, let you travel on his boat as a guest.'

'Splendid', I cried. 'But how do I find the friend?'

'Well', he said, 'I'll give you a letter of introduction to a man in St. Paul. He knows everybody on the Mississippi and if it can be done he'll do it.'

This letter sent me running, despite a temperature of 99° F., to catch the next bus to the twin cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul.

## CHAPTER XII

### MINNEAPOLIS AND ST. PAUL

MINNEAPOLIS and St. Paul are known as 'Twin Cities' but they are so unlike in history and character that each ought to be dealt with separately. Each has grown up on both sides of the river but their 'down town' sections, ten miles apart, are separated by residential districts, and there is nothing like a closely packed, side-by-side collection of houses extending from the one city to the other.

Minneapolis began at the Falls of St. Anthony where there was power for mills: St. Paul began at a shack where a French Canadian, nicknamed Pig Eye, sold liquor. Says a flippant historian 'Minneapolis was conceived in water: St. Paul was conceived in whisky'. Mark Twain, on a visit to St. Paul, made the latter fact the text of some remarks which concluded with 'How solemn and beautiful is the thought that the earliest pioneer of civilisation, the van leader, is never the steamboat, never the railroad, never the newspaper, never the Sabbath School, but always whisky! The missionary comes after the whisky — I mean he arrives after the whisky has arrived; next the trader, next the miscellaneous rush, next the gambler, the desperado, the highwayman, and all their kindred of sin of both sexes, and next the smart chap who has bought up an old grant that covers all the land; this brings the lawyer tribe, the vigilante committees, and this brings the undertaker. All these interests bring the newspaper; the newspaper starts up politics and a railroad; all hands turn to and build a church and a jail and behold; Civilisation is established for ever in the land. Westward the jug of Empire takes its way.'

The Twin Cities have not always been friendly. There has been, in the past, much rivalry, even much jealousy between them, 'well indicated by an oft-told story to the effect that one Sunday evening a Minneapolis minister started his sermon by saying, 'I take my text this evening from St. Paul', whereupon the con-

gregation rose en masse and filed out of the church, refusing to listen to any such doctrine.' \*

I found Minneapolis far too interesting to leave in a hurry, especially as I was in no hurry. In some ways it is unique. It must, I think, be the only city in the world possessing over twenty natural lakes and lakelets within its official limits. Most of these lakes, moreover, are not tiny ponds: the shore lines of some of them measure as much as four miles. The larger ones are all

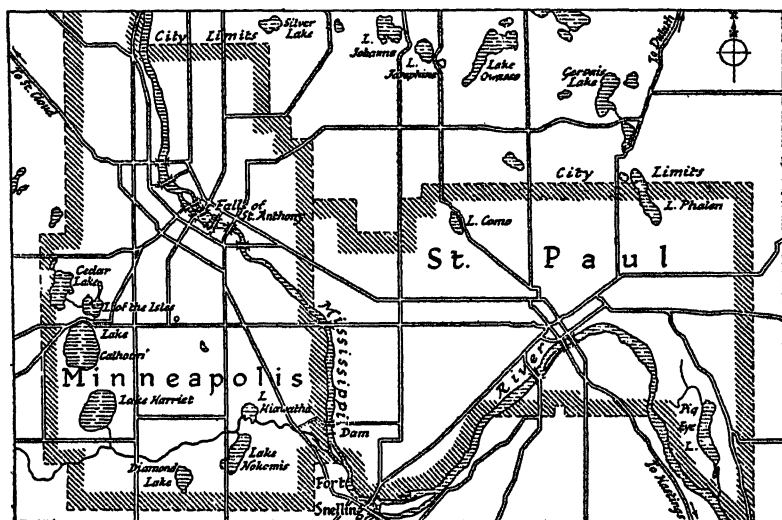


Fig. 19. Minneapolis and St. Paul

surrounded by beautiful parks where bridle paths wind in and out under the shade of magnificent trees.

There are other parks besides these, one hundred and forty-three in all, providing one acre of open space for every ninety-two inhabitants. They contain miles of paths where one can take long country walks right in the heart of a city of close on 400,000 people.

At the end of one of my city promenades, when I had covered about eight miles of charming roads and trails, I asked a negress which street car I should have to take to reach my hotel.

\* J. Russell Smith, *North America*.

'You'se lost?' she enquired, 'Waal I'll take care o' yuh. I'se a public woman!'

I began to wonder whether I was in fit company or not till she explained that she was a private nurse and that her profession brought her into contact with many people, mostly white.

'Don't you bother', she continued. 'I'm goin' your way and this is a friendly city. In Minneapolis Jews, coloured folk, whites, an' the whites is mos'sly Swedes, is all friends. I'll take care o' yuh. We'se all friends in Minneapolis. What yuh think o' Hitler? He's too dog-gone smart, he is. But they'll git him. What yuh carry that map fo'? 'Fraid o' losin you'self? You don't mind. I'll take care o' yuh. I won't lose yuh.'

The people in the street car were all laughing, but good naturedly: they were all friends in Minneapolis. My nurse kept her word and led me to the door of my hotel.

'Here yuh are', she said. 'A coloured woman's brought yuh home an' now a coloured porter is goin' to welcome yuh into the hotel. See how we coloured folks looks after yo' whites.'

The negro in Minneapolis is very much a part of the picture, not simply as a porter at a railway station but often as a citizen of some importance. Negroes form about one-fifth of the population of the United States and though they are most numerous in the south a great many of them have migrated to the north where, and where only, they are truly free. In the north the negro has a vote and uses it: in the south, though he is theoretically a citizen with full rights, means are found of depriving him of some of them.

Wherever the negroes get a chance of full development they seem, on the whole, to make good use of it. Though many of them are still only porters and domestic servants and, in business houses where they are employed, are 'the last to be hired and the first to be fired', yet there are many others who have acquired much wealth and now own land equal in area to the whole of Scotland. In the south white and black attend separate schools: in the north they go to school together and many of them graduate at the universities and take up such professions as teaching, preaching and the law.

Having shaken hands with my guide I entered the hotel. It was

packed with Oddfellows and their Rebekahs. Some ten thousand of them were holding a convention at Minneapolis and making the streets as bright as the flower-beds in the parks with their ceremonial garments. There were men in purple fezzes adorned with gold braid, creamy yellow shirts and scarlet trousers, others dressed as admirals with plumes in their hats, others radiant in brass and vermilion, generals flourished swords and scimitars. Girls and grandmothers, all 'girls' in American parlance, frolicked in long white or scarlet satin robes that billowed round their evening frocks. As a small boy once said to his mother about a lady with jaundice, they made a bright spot of colour.

All were thoroughly enjoying themselves. They looked like a circus procession and took themselves quite as seriously. They were temporarily children dressing up and believing, not pretending. This kind of thing is common in America. I fancy it acts as an outlet for the partially stifled love of formal pomp and pageantry of the older countries. I expect the Lord Mayor's procession in London would look just as comic to an American.

The next day the Funeral Directors met for their weekly lunch. I would have given much to be present to listen to the jokes. Joking is often of a specialised character. Lawyers tell legal stories, anglers tell fishing stories and colonels tell naughty ones. What do Funeral Directors find humorous in a coffin or a hearse?

Historically, geographically and commercially the most important thing in Minneapolis is the Falls of St. Anthony, though there are no longer any real falls. They have been replaced by a series of concrete coffers. There are two dams, an upper and a lower, respectively above and below the spot where water once cascaded but where it is now controlled and allowed at suitable times to slide down a concrete slope. These dams are two of a series of twenty-seven which, in a distance of 500 miles, have converted the Father of Waters into an equal number of navigation pools. Locks at the sides of the dams permit the passage of the river craft. There are no tolls and the lock gates are opened as readily for the passage of a single rowing boat as they are for the largest craft that sails the stream.

At the foot of the falls are the greatest flour milling plants in the world. The wheat they grind comes from a mixed farming

region to the north and from the broad spring-wheat area which stretches from Minneapolis to Winnipeg in Canada and beyond to the Rocky Mountains.

By permission of General Mills Inc., I visited the Washburn Crosby 'C' Mill. A young university student in agriculture acted as my guide. He took me to the top of the eight-story building in an elevator: we walked down.

Flour milling is older than recorded history, yet the principles on which it is based have never changed. As of old the grain is still ground between two heavy surfaces, though steel rollers have now taken the place of stones. Modern skill and appliances, however, can now sort out the germ of the seed and its overcoat of bran and leave the pure white flour demanded by modern ignorance for its bread.

If it had not been for my guide I might have been lost and bewildered amongst the masses of machinery, yet the processes were not difficult to follow (Fig. 20). I saw the wheat come into the mill travelling on an endless band, through a tunnel, from elevators which can store six million bushels per mill. I watched it move to the purifiers where seeds of other plants that grew with the wheat, iron nails, buttons, hair curlers and other foreign bodies picked up in the harvest field were removed. I followed the purified product to the scouring mill where rapidly revolving cylinders cleaned and brightened the grain and to the moistening and washing plant which rendered easy the separation of the hard, brittle bran in flakes.

The washed wheat passed through a rolling machine which slightly crushed the kernels: the tough bran flaked off and was sifted out. Grinding and sifting: that is the story of white flour. The sifting is done through one fine meshed silk cloth after another the meshes becoming gradually smaller and smaller. The wheat may be ground and sifted as many as fourteen times before a pure white flour drops down a chute into a hopper which discharges, at each delivery, just as much as a sack will hold, after which the sacks are sewn up, mostly by automatic machines.

From start to finish the wheat is never touched by hand and very few people are seen in the mill because most of the work is done automatically. There is no dirt, merely a light white pow-



der here and there upon the parquet flooring. The solitude and the efficiency combine to produce an atmosphere more akin to devilry than joy. The magnitude of the operations is baffling in its immensity. The mill I visited could, in a single day, use all

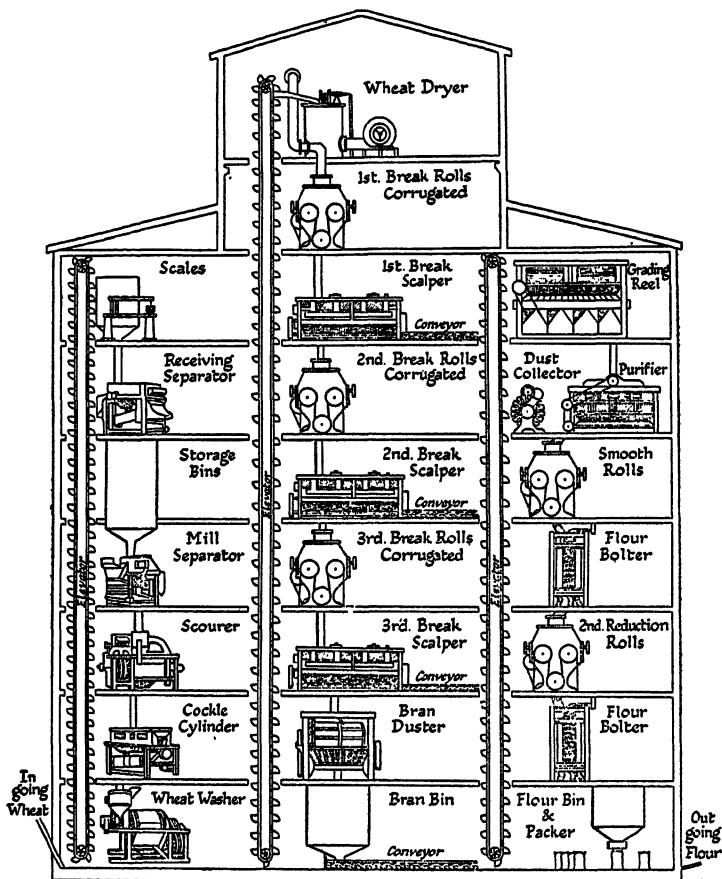


Fig. 20. Diagram of a Flour Mill

the wheat that could be grown on twenty thousand acres and produce enough flour for the making of twenty-four million loaves of bread.

As one of the greatest dangers is that of explosions due to dust all the machinery is tightly covered to prevent flour dust from

blowing into the air. Dust collectors, with big, constantly rotating drums, are located throughout the mill, gather the dust and send it down metal tubes to the outside.

A trifle stunned I crossed the river to the university where I was due to lunch with some friends. Following the left bank through another milling district I came to a bronze tablet fastened to a granite boulder where I read 'From time immemorial Indians, traders and explorers among whom were Hennepin and Carver, have used the Mississippi River as a highway of travel. Unloading their canoes at the bend just below here they plodded up the portage trail across what is now the University Campus and along the bluffs to a point about half a mile above the Falls of St. Anthony.'

If they came up the river by canoe to-day they would not have to portage as they did in the times when, from cliff to cliff across the valley, they heard the war cries of the Indians but, above the falls, they would no longer find the river 'a highway of travel'. All the way from Lake Itasca to Minneapolis I had not seen a score of canoes or rowing boats except as playthings in the neighbourhood of towns; of larger craft I had seen none at all.

The campus was alive with thousands of freshmen wandering about, wondering and making friends, for it was registration week. America is well supplied with universities — one hundred and thirty-seven of them: their students are counted by the million. The University of Minnesota, the third largest, has 27,000 students. The largest, California, has 40,800 students and 2376 teachers.

These figures are a little misleading because the university in America teaches many subjects that, in other lands, are taught by other institutions. The President of the University of Chicago, one of the finest in the United States, says 'Almost any American university, in addition to teaching law, medicine, theology and engineering will offer instruction in journalism, business, librarianship, social service, education, dentistry, forestry, diplomacy, pharmacy, veterinary surgery and public administration . . . They train hotel managers, beauty shop operators, real estate men, news photographers or anything else for which there is a large enough demand. An American university will teach

anything which will attract philanthropy or student fees.'

My main interest at Minneapolis was, of course, not its position, exactly half way between the North Pole and the Equator, its flour mills rising above swirling waters, its broad, radiating avenues, or its powerful university, but the River Mississippi, here a magnificent river, as full of charm, except for the comparatively small section occupied by dams, power plants, mills and elevators, as when the Indians regarded it with fear and honoured it with worship.

From its source in Lake Itasca to the Falls of St. Anthony the Mississippi, as already remarked, lies on a bed of glacial deposit. At the falls it enters an area which, during the ice invasions, remained uncovered. Generally speaking the valley of the river now becomes a deep, flat-floored trench, two to six miles wide, bordered by steep cliffs or bluffs.

Immediately below the Falls of St. Anthony, however, the valley takes the form of a deep narrow gorge the bridging of which has laid a heavy tax upon the two cities. On the left bank, a magnificent boulevard runs along the heights; between the boulevard and the edge of the bank is a wide space of grass, trees and shrubs through which footpaths trail their shady courses. Road and path from time to time swing inwards to round the ravines which etch the limestone plateau, crossing them at their heads where small falls interrupt the rivulets coming to feed and lose themselves in the river: all this, be it noted, is within the city itself.

At one point I came to a path leading down one of the ravines to the side of the river. I descended by this path and, almost for the first time in my pilgrimage, could walk at the edge of the water. Seen against the sun the river was a silver spangled ribbon between abrupt and thickly wooded cliffs. There was no one about except a solitary fisher on the opposite bank and, on mine, a group of schoolboys spending their Saturday morning shying stones at a floating petrol can.

The path took me into a stone works and dwindled to a tiny overgrown trail along which I pushed my way amongst burrs and briars. I clambered back to the boulevard and crossed the river to Fort Snelling, established in 1819 to protect fur-traders from

Indians, on a bluff rising boldly at the junction of the Mississippi and the Minnesota Rivers. One grey stone tower remains, a picturesque reminder of an epoch which vanished but yesternight.

On another occasion I visited St. Paul, so different from its twin. Minneapolis sprawls over level ground and its streets are broad avenues: St. Paul climbs the hillside and its streets are narrow and congested. Between the edge of the upland and the river are two natural terraces. On the lower terrace are the railway yards; on the higher are the commercial houses; on the crest are the chief residences. The two sides of the gorge are not of equal height at all cross sections and two of the connecting bridges are not horizontal as we expect a bridge to be but inclined at fairly steep gradients.

From the bridges you look down into the trough to islands with sandy shores, the headquarters of various boating and yachting clubs. The sight of small boats at the clubs and of barges at the docks inspired me with hope, and I forthwith went to present the letter of introduction I had received in St. Cloud to the man who knew everybody on the Mississippi. He read the letter out aloud to me. One sentence I remember with amusement and pride — 'The bearer is apparently a sincere Englishman.'

We discussed my proposed journey. I learned there was an excursion steamer which came up once a year from New Orleans, remained at St. Paul to make a few evening trips on the river with dancing in the moonlight and other attractions for its passengers, and then returned to New Orleans. It had departed the previous night: its next down-stream trip would be in about twelve months. If I cared to wait for five months, however, there would be another excursion steamer which called at St. Louis in connection with a trip from Cincinnati to New Orleans and back. There was no other form of passenger service on all these wandering miles of navigable waters!

If I felt sufficiently adventurous I could, so I was told, buy or hire a shanty-boat, a kind of flat-bottomed house-boat occupied, usually, by one or more 'water-rats', hire also a reliable veteran shanty man, if one such could be found, for a few dollars a week and his food, and navigate the river myself. But my informant did not recommend this except to those of hardy spirit and great

physical endurance and looked at me as though he thought I did not meet the description.

He would, however, give me an introduction to the General Manager of the Federal Barge Line and I could consult him. I went to see the General Manager and, American fashion, walked straight into his office. He was busy. He looked stern and not too pleased with my intrusion. Without asking who I was or what I wanted, he opened the interview by saying 'I'm busy. I've a lot of work on hand. Monday's my busiest day.'

I put on my best manners and my most persuasive eloquence and spoke with brevity but with lucidity and eagerness. I took only four minutes. When I had finished he said 'Gee! I'd be tickled to death to help you. The Federal Barge Line has one tow-boat with a spare room in it and sometimes a very special person may get permission to use it. I must consult the boss at St. Louis. Give me to the end of the week.'

I was so elated that, at dinner that night, I ordered wine, expensive as it was, and silently drank to the Manager's health. One of the Oddfellows who was sitting with his Rebekah at the next table, saw me smiling over the ruby liquid and said to her 'Let's try some of that stuff ourselves'. He called the waiter and said 'What's that guy drinking?' When he was told he ordered half a bottle; they divided it into two tumblers, poured the whole of it down their throats as if it were medicine and then drank water with their dinner! I am sorry to say I celebrated too soon. At the end of the week my friendly manager sent me a letter he had received from St. Louis which ran: 'We regret to advise that because of recent increase in our crews there is absolutely no spare room on any of our boats operating north of St. Louis and as a matter of fact, the only boat operating below St. Louis that has any spare room is the *Hoover* which runs from St. Louis to Memphis.'

I repressed my tears, repacked my baggage and rejoined the bus.

## CHAPTER XIII

### MINNEAPOLIS TO MUSCATINE

I left Minneapolis on October 1. It was really time to depart for though the weather was sunny the temperature was low except in the hotel where the steam heaters were in full blast and the rooms were like ovens.

As far as Hastings the land is flattish or slightly undulating. The river cannot be seen from the road but its position is marked by a green line where it is giving life to the trees upon its banks. Just below Hastings occurred one of the many steam-boat accidents whose stories fill pages of the history of the navigation of the Mississippi. It was a common enough accident, a case of running aground during low water, but the method of refloating the vessel was unique. She drew only twelve inches of water and the pilot claimed that he set her free by shifting his 'chaw' of tobacco from the starboard to the port side of his mouth.

The entry into Red Wing (so named from an Indian chief), where I halted for the night, is along a curving road which leads down from the plateau between gentle wooded slopes with the big Barn Bluff in the background of the picture. Red Wing in its layout is typical of all the little towns in this section of the Mississippi — a series of lines more or less in the direction of the river arranged in the following order — the river promenade with a tiny narrow park, railroad tracks, grain elevators and factories, Main Street and other parallel avenues. It does not sound very attractive but whenever you turn your back on the track and the elevators and face the river the view is often of great charm. In this case it reminded me of one of the wooded reaches of the Thames and did not look much wider, but the appearance was deceptive as only one of a number of channels was visible: the land facing me was not the opposite bank of the river but the nearer shore of Pretzel Island. For many miles, on account of the numerous islands, one can rarely look right across the

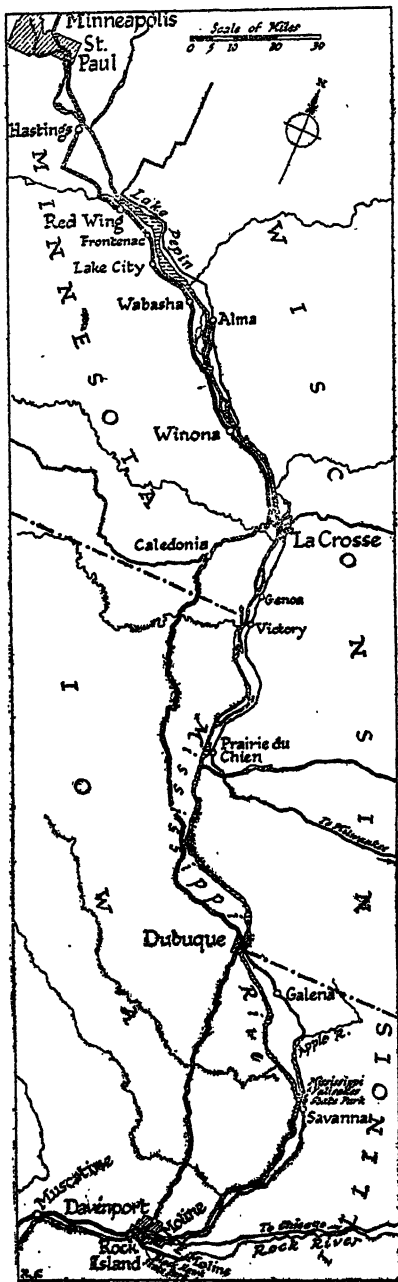


Fig. 21 Minneapolis to Muscatine

river from bank to bank without climbing the bluffs.

Should I climb Barn Bluff, on the summit of which Red Wing is buried? I could, upon his exalted resting place, pay fitting homage to his memory and behold the view at the same time, but I was tired. As I approached its foot I came upon an inscription in stone recording that 'Colonel Zebulon Pike, U.S.A., climbed this bluff in 1805'. That settled it. If I never crossed Pike's Path again I could meet him here. I could not, however, follow exactly in his footsteps since the ascent is now made by some hundreds of steps forming a memorial stairway to the pioneers who founded Red Wing. On every step is the name of a subscriber to the project. Few of these names are British.

The climb was worth the trouble. In front lay the steep-walled trench, several miles wide, floored by the flat plain through which the great river winds. The sky line of the bluffs, marking the edge of the plateau, lay almost level, but the bluffs themselves had much grace and variety of form, and the mixture of bare, white rock with the dark brown and dull green of field and woodland was rich



*Photo: Ernest Young*

### At the source of the Mississippi

The pillar on the right gives the altitude of the spot above sea-level and the length of the river



The first bridge across the Mississippi at the exit from Lake Itasca





*Photo: Ernest Young*

**The Mississippi**  
Looking downstream from the exit from Lake Bemidji



*Photo: Ernest Young*

**Grand Rapids, Minnesota**  
The Mississippi almost choked with pulp-wood. On the left is a paper-mill



*Photo: Minneapolis Civic and Commerce Association*

## Minneapolis

Three of the twenty-two lakes and lakelets within the city limits



*Photo: Ernest Young*

**Fort Snelling, Minneapolis**



*Photo: Ernest Young*

**The Mississippi Gorge  
between Minneapolis and St. Paul**



*Photo: Ernest Young*

### **The Mississippi at Redwing, Minnesota**

This view, looking up-stream, shows the typical arrangement of many small riverside towns—parallel lines of park, railway and warehouses. The residential quarter lies behind. Notice also the islands in the river and the long line of bluffs in the distance



*Photo: Ernest Young*

Bluffs, flood plain and modern dam on the Mississippi at Dubuque



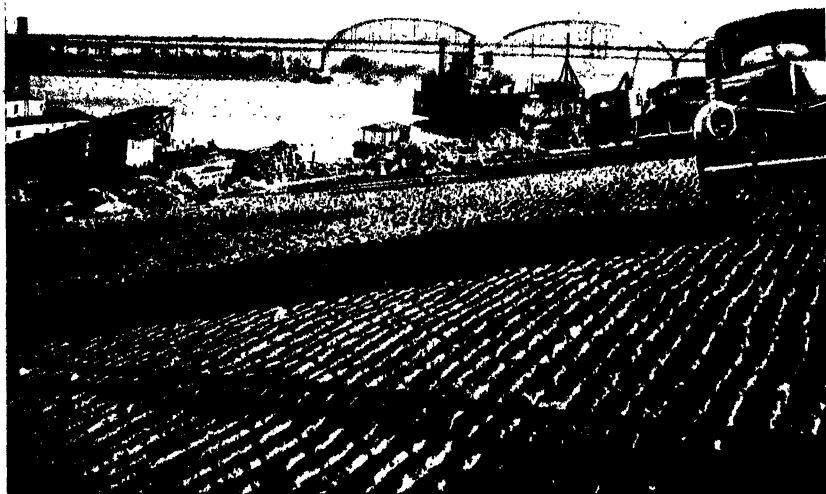
*Photo: Ernest Young*

Typical islands and channels in the Mississippi  
From the bluffs in Palisaders Park, Savanna



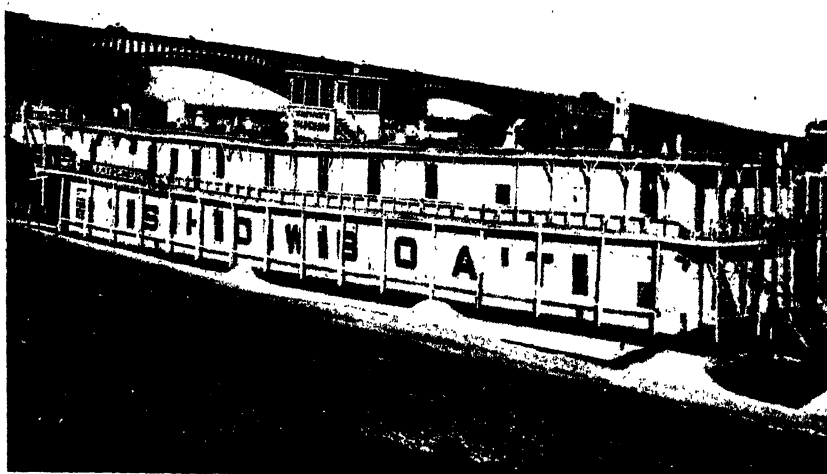
Photo: Ernest Young

Mark Twain's house and Tom Sawyer's fence, Hannibal



*Photo: Ernest Young*

Water front, St. Louis



*Photo: Ernest Young*

The Showboat at St. Louis  
One of the last in existence

with mellow colour. The shining river, in many silver channels meandering from side to side, gave a sense of irresistible power and purpose. As I looked at the sun-baked panorama at my feet I felt an even greater urge than ever to be in a boat. There were a number of speed-boats, fishing boats and canoes filled with Sunday holiday makers. Some people were making use, for their pleasure, of this broad, proudly rolling stream. Why not I?

I went down to the Boat Club, a picturesque collection of hut-like wooden shelters floating on the river and moored to posts, in which the larger craft found shelter, but there was no one about, and even if there had been none of the tiny craft appeared suitable to my purpose.

I visited a man who inhabited a floating shack with a sign 'Boats and Bait': the bait indicated the type of the boats. The man, in answer to my enquiries, said, 'You can't go down this river as a passenger no ways' and I sadly returned to the bus.

When we reached Frontenac station I wondered whether I ought to get down to look at the village of Frontenac where the French first settled in this northern country. I had heard I should find here traces of France and of French influence but I was sceptical of finding anything French in an American town. The system of building in rectangular blocks wipes out the material evidences of the past and stifles its memories. I had already found it almost impossible to recapture the romance of a dead past in these four-square settlements and decided to remain in the bus.

A little way beyond Frontenac the Mississippi runs into or widens into Lake Pepin: there is some local dispute as to whether the 'lake' is a real lake or just a widening of the river channel: it is between twenty and thirty miles long and has a width of two and a half miles. The entrance to it is marked by the Maiden Rock, the scene of an Indian legend. According to the story Winona, daughter of Red Wing, fell in love with the son of the chief of the Chippewas, the hereditary enemies of her own tribe. The lovers planned an elopement, but on the night when they fled to their hidden canoe they were surprised by a jealous lover to whom Winona had been promised by her father. A fight ensued and the Chippewa was slain. Winona took him in her arms, ran



to the top of the cliff and threw herself and the lifeless body into the river below. A pretty story but based on a perfectly impossible physical feat and a fine disregard of the geography of the locality.

Such Indian cliff-love stories are common in America. A scoffing writer says of one of the heroines — 'Some of the older Indians claimed she got drunk and fell over, and a few mountain men told that her parents backed her over, not to prevent her marriage but in an effort to hold her down while they washed her feet.' \*

The shores of Lake Pepin are steep and rugged in many places and the scenery was so charming that I dropped off at the small town of Lake City. At the moment the wind was raising big waves, and a small sailing boat was struggling hard to reach the shelter of the little pier. This lake has always been noted for its treachery. The greatest toll of human life was taken in July 1890 when an excursion steamer, *Sea Wing*, capsized during a storm and more than three hundred people perished.

Lake City calls itself 'Little Switzerland' and, though the claim is an exaggerated one, spots can be found where the views are not unlike those of some of the Swiss lakes. One such spot is a spit of wooded, sandy ground where tourists may camp or hire cottages. From this I could see both the lake and the lofty bluffs, and as the tops of the bluffs were hidden by the trees it was possible to imagine them as much higher than they really are. The slopes are so steep that even cedars find it hard to take more than a precarious hold, but in tiny clearings in the intermediate valleys there is a little farm land and a few houses.

There had been frosts during the previous two or three nights and the trees had made up their minds it was time they began to display some of that gorgeous pageantry — the blending of yellow beeches, rusty brown oaks, copper and rose of maples — which belongs to the golden season of the year, and the highway to my next stopping place, Winona, was bordered with flame—orange, yellow, scarlet, brown and purple: Nature was in her gayest mood.

The river is in full view as far as Wabasha and I think I saw as much, perhaps more of it from the bus than I could have seen

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\* H. L. Davis, *Honey in the Horn*.

from a boat. It was a most amazingly intricate network of marshes, green islands and sandy banks laced by the branching river. At one point I counted eight almost parallel silver channels streaming their shimmering paths along the flood plain. Above rose the rounded, pointed or squared outlines of the bordering bluffs.

As the day was fading and the lights along the buoyed channels were twinkling we rode into the prosperous little town of Winona, its streets paved with warm-coloured bricks. I took up my quarters at an old-fashioned hotel which was eloquent of the past. Its red bricks, spacious lobby, elaborate decorations of coloured glass, its carved pillars and balcony, and its lofty dining room might have been built in Victorian England.

Winona, as a town, was soon explored — river front, narrow green strip of park, railway, factories and elevators, First Street, Second Street and so on were typical. I left the town, crossed the river by a bridge half a mile long and entered the state of Wisconsin. On the other side of the bridge was a sign board — 'Izaak Walton Park'. It pleased me to see our angling philosopher so honoured so far from home. The park is part of a great area, three hundred miles long and containing three hundred thousand acres, which has been saved as a refuge for wild life. The area, as a whole, is known as the Winnesheik Bottoms and contains forests, streams, marshes and islands. The wilderness looks much as it looked when the Indians roamed the country and the fur trader's post was the only sign of the white man's civilisation. The thickly wooded islands and the swamps, the homes of millions of wild fowl, and the haunts of beaver and musk-rat, would easily be recognised as their old happy hunting grounds by the spirits of the Sioux, Algonquin or Chippewa if ever they wander here in the shadows.

Two big changes, however, have taken place since their time. The first is the building of a big dam which holds up much water and creates a new lake, while the other is a marvel of a railway track which runs on high embankments through swamps still thickly inhabited by the musk-rat and the other fur-bearing animals that attracted the early trappers.

I lazed along with the shaded green pools and cool green glades of the refuge on one side and the steep bluffs on the other. Seen

from a distance these bluffs lack variety. Near at hand they are seen as fantastic cliffs with wooded valleys in between. Some look like rows of turreted castles: others have been carved by the weather into almost human forms. One, with a gaunt featured face, was worshipped by the Indians as the visage of the Great Spirit, and the white scars on the heights around it are the marks left by their fires.

The scene is that of the Rhine, but more impressive, and it is not surprising that the site of Alma, on a narrow strip of level land at the foot of the bluffs, was chosen by some German settlers because it reminded them of home.

When I was getting tired a man in a car called 'Want a lift?' I consented to be lifted and he drove me, past Eagle Bluff the highest point on the Mississippi, and Indian Rock with its likeness to an Indian chief, as far as Fountain City and Alma. The road was all the more pleasing because it curved. A road which follows a river is not master of its fate: the river controls its goings. The curves were littered with corpses — one or two hens and ducks but recently expired, and uncountable snakes. My sorrow for the fate of the hens and the ducks was drowned in my glee at that of the snakes.

As already related I once had a passing notion that if I could not sail the Mississippi I might walk along its banks as I had walked the shorter ones of the Thames and other rivers. This I had already discovered would not have been possible. The river rises and spreads so far in flood time that towns and villages tend to stand higher up on terraces, and roads usually avoid its edges.

The road from Winona to La Crosse, however, did follow, for the most part, the river bank. The mists of a cold, damp, gloomy morning hid the Wisconsin bluffs from three to six miles away. Nothing, however, could destroy the beauty of the river with its mysterious channels, backwaters and islands. The entrance to La Crosse was through a part of the Winnesheik Bottoms where the lotus blooms in summer. When I had crossed the river and reached La Crosse I was again in Wisconsin; on the right bank, to the south, was Iowa.

La Crosse, so called by French Canadians in honour of their missionaries, was originally the scene of the winter camps and

intertribal conferences of the Winnebago Indians. In the intervals between the pow-wows the tribes played the game, later adopted and modified by French Canadian traders, now known as lacrosse. Several Winnebago villages still exist in the neighbourhood and the annual pow-wow is by no means a thing of the past.

La Crosse, like Winona and a number of other towns to the south, is paved with purple-red bricks, all of which have come from one enormous deposit of brick clay. The deposit has been worked for close on ten years but scarcely any impression has been made on it.

I was urged by local residents to ascend the craggy dignity of Grandad Bluff, 550 feet above the river, 1172 feet above the sea. Where the beautiful residential section of the town ended, I trod, for a few yards, inches deep in fine sand like that of the seashore till I regained a paved road and began a winding uphill climb of about three miles, through a landscape of indescribable beauty. There was a new and splendid vision at every turn of the highway. The still dark green of the oaks acted as a foil to the great variety of ruddy autumn hues shown by the other trees, while lacy patterns, made by now bare twigs, were etched against a fairyland of tinted leaf.

From the summit the river was seen flowing from one lake-like, island-dotted expanse to another, then behaving as a normal stream for a few miles, then again becoming a maze of channels. The midstream islands were generously wooded and variously coloured. Shimmering lagoons, green as emeralds, nestled amongst the trees. The sun-illuminated panorama was bewildering.

The bluff itself seemed to be keeping watch over the Coulee Region to which it belongs, part of that considerable area in the northern United States which escaped being planed down and lowered by glaciers. This driftless area, completely surrounded by glaciated territory, has 'no lakes to make youthful its countenance; no erratic-strewn rock gardens to freckle the landscape.' It preserves a large sample of what the north and the east of the United States were like before the glacial period.

The many streams of the region, fed by springs, flow in deep-cut steep-walled rock trenches called *coulees*. The plateau has an almost imperceptible roll: there is no confusion of hills typical

of the glacial regions to the north. The only changes of surface have been caused by centuries of slow weathering.

A notice on the bluff informed me of the latitude and longitude of the place, from which I calculated that, measuring from London, I was about one quarter of the way round the globe and measuring from the North Pole a little more than half way to the equator.

In order to continue from La Crosse towards the equator by bus the traveller has to leave the river and go inland for some little way. He thus misses one or two places of interest on the Wisconsin bank of the Mississippi. The courteous Secretary of the Chamber of Commerce at La Crosse, anxious that I should not miss them, drove me to them in his private car. We motored through Genoa, settled and named by Italians, where it is said the water-front with fishing nets drying on the beach is reminiscent of the Mediterranean, through Victory at the mouth of Bad Axe river, the scene of the decisive battle in the Black Hawk War of 1832 when Indian mothers, to escape the white man's guns, attempted to swim the Mississippi with their children on their backs, and at last reached Prairie du Chien.

The history of Prairie du Chien goes back to the days of the Mound Builders, the predecessors of the historic Indian tribes. They lived in the Mississippi valley somewhere between 500 and 1000 A.D. but the only record of their existence is to be found in their mounds and other earth-works. The excavation of these has brought to light evidence to show that the men wore a broad breech-cloth, leggings and moccasins, and the women knee-length wrap-round skirts; that they had considerable artistic ability, made pottery, and fashioned knives, ceremonial spears and arrow-heads from flint.

In the company of the mayor and a judge I went to see the largest mound discovered in Wisconsin, but my guides thought I should be more interested in a house built on the top of it. This was once the home of Colonel Hercules Dousman, millionaire of the west, who in pre-civil-war days lived like a baron of feudal France. My hosts regarded it as one of the landmarks of the past grandeur of Prairie du Chien and, because it was built in 1815, as one of great age. Yet amongst its redwood and mahogany

furniture, its lace curtains, china, paintings and books I was back in the home of my grandparents and recaptured my earliest boyhood when I was dressed, like young Hercules himself, as a girl!

My friends were full of stories of the time when Prairie du Chien was a fur trading centre, of the capture of the French military post by the British and how it passed to the United States in 1812. I was always coming across those terrible Britishers: they seemed to have been shedding blood wherever I went.

The most interesting story was told me in front of a bronze tablet fixed on a fourteen-ton boulder. It concerned a doctor named Beaumont and a boatman named Alexis St. Martin. The boatman was accidentally shot in the stomach. Beaumont saved his life but could never heal the hole in the stomach. Through this hole, of course with the patient's consent, he pushed in food on a spoon and studied the digestive processes. Altogether he conducted over two hundred experiments. We can well imagine that St. Martin was bored, and not be surprised that, when the doctor wanted to study the effect of alcohol, the patient insisted he would not permit it to enter his stomach except by way of his mouth.

From La Crosse my bus climbed leisurely up woodland valleys to a plateau. At Caledonia we changed buses. In the new one was a notice, 'Do not visit with the driver'. This was not a prohibition against knowing the man or his family: it was simply the American form of 'Do not talk to the driver'. In the United States 'Come to visit me' means 'Let's have a chat' and is not an offer of temporary board and lodging.

In a few miles we were in Iowa, a state whose interests are predominantly hogs and corn: its only rival in these respects is its eastern neighbour Illinois. As far as the eye could see the land rolled, patterned with acres of soil, as fertile as any farmer could desire, black where it had recently been ploughed, dark or light green where crops were standing or ripening in the fields. The patchwork was all the more striking on account of its immensity.

This section of the United States, known as the Corn Belt, covers a quarter of a million square miles. The soil is of almost stoneless richness. Here the glaciers did much smoothing and mixing but there are few stones in the mixture. The interest to the traveller is never of a scenic character: there is nothing

thrilling in the gently rolling surface and murky streams of Iowa. But the way in which man has adapted this land for profitable living is a stirring example of American methods.

Because the land in the Corn Belt is either flat or only gently rolling it was, for purposes of settlement, laid out in squares, a mile each way, with the roads running north and south or east and west. The square mile was divided into four sections each of one hundred and sixty acres.

Not far from the roadside, on each section, stands the farmhouse — two-storied, built of wood, and painted white. It is usually surrounded by trees which have been planted for shade from the sun and shelter from the wind. A group of substantial wooden buildings, close at hand, includes a big barn, a tall silo, corn cribs, open-faced sheds sheltering farm machinery, wagons, kegs of nails, yokes for oxen, pig styes and chicken houses: an outer rim, of wheels, discarded horseshoes and piles of wood, is an integral part of the picture. All the buildings, except the house, are painted the same tint of red which one sees in the farm buildings of Scandinavia. The rule is that you may paint a barn any colour you please so long as you paint it red, but the shade of red seems never to vary except as the result of weathering.

The house is supplied with water pumped from a well by a windmill: windmills are as much a feature of the landscape as rummaging birds, turkeys fattening for Thanksgiving Day, Holstein cattle, and men throwing corn to grunting hogs from a cart. I saw more than one farmer picking corn by hand and tossing it into a shallow cart, but machinery is rapidly putting an end to such toilsome labour. In fact machinery has been so successfully employed in this and other operations that while the wealth of the Corn Belt has increased its population has decreased.

For many miles our way lay on the high plateau and I had the feeling of being on the top of the world. At times we descended into the valleys of streams which crossed our path to flow into the Mississippi, a proud end for any stream; but we always went back to the upland until, about ten miles from Dubuque, we ran through a narrow valley between hills rising several hundreds of feet and forming impregnable walls on either side, down to the cattle-dotted pastures on the brink of the stream.

Dubuque lies at the foot of huge precipitous bluffs which confine the industrial and business centres, bring many of the side streets to a sudden stop, and make it necessary for streets ascending to the residential section on the plateau to wind and not run straight.

All these riverside towns — La Crosse, Prairie du Chien, Dubuque and so on — have much the same kind of history and therefore the same kinds of stories to tell. Commonest of all are those that recall the stirring days of the seventeenth century, when the French hurried both from the north and the south to trade in the furs and minerals which opened a richer vista than if the river had been in truth what they once thought it was — a route to Cathay. The choicest story I heard at Dubuque was, however, about the first schoolmaster, George Cubbage, who began his mission when the town was little more than a muddy main street lined with cabins and saloons. Soon afterwards he was captured by Indians who sold him to a trader for nothing but a plug of tobacco, not because they wished to disparage his scholastic attainments, but because he was baldheaded and could not be scalped!

On a bright but chilly morning I crossed the Mississippi into Illinois and approached Galena whose name explains its origin — lead mines, though to-day it is more noted for its creameries and cheese factories. The citizens tell of the time when it was larger than Chicago, but to-day it has only about 4,000 inhabitants.

Somewhere on this journey and not far from Galena, but I can't remember where, I saw two plain but solidly built stone cottages sitting up pugnaciously in a street of rather mean wooden houses. They had a familiar appearance but not an American one. On enquiring as to their origin I learned they had been built in the early days of the mining industry by two Cornishmen who had left the mines of Cornwall for those of Illinois. Nothing else would suit them as homes than Cornish cottages, and they built them so solidly that nothing but dynamite would wreck their handiwork. Cornishmen have left traces of themselves in Cornish cream, pasties and saffron cakes all the way across America from the mines of Illinois and Wisconsin to those of Montana and Califor-



nia. In fact it is easier to buy saffron cakes amongst the gold mining towns of California than in Cornwall itself.

From Galena we wound down through the valley of the beautiful Apple River, skirted numerous rocky cliffs, and ran under low bluffs divided from each other by shallow valleys and small ravines: on our right was the damp, cool, flood plain, whose green meadows were a picture of pastoral loveliness. On the lower meadows cattle were grazing; on the higher, dryer ones corn and hay were growing; at the very edge forest vegetation hid the sparkle of the river.

I arrived in Savanna early enough to see, before lunch, all there was of this small town of purple-brick streets built at the foot and on the sides of some very steep slopes. I shed a tear at the fate of many trees slowly dying in the new lake formed by one of the new dams, saw with envious eyes a shanty boat being pushed along by an out-board motor, and was thinking of catching the next bus south when I saw, in a shop window, some of those horribly coloured picture post-cards which are either a libel or a sad comment on American artistic taste. They showed me, however, something I had missed on the bus. I had been so intent on looking towards the river on my right that I had been unaware of the Mississippi Palisades State Park on my left. After lunch I walked back to the park and lost the afternoon bus.

The park sits on the top of some towering cliffs between which are numerous, deep, wooded, mossy ravines. It is characterised by caves, cyclopean rocks and fantastic rock formations — Indian Head, Twin Sisters and so on — which may be reached by gentle Indian trails amongst trees, ferns and wildflowers or by much more venturesome rock-climbing up the faces of the cliffs.

From certain view points one sees miles of wild-game refuge preserving the aboriginal aspect of the river lands. Here the stately heron preens himself in safety and the blue jays flash and flicker through the foliage, a ballet scene of Nature's producing accompanied by arias of the lark and the rich liquid song of the thrush. The beauty and the splendour of the outlook are so impressive that the railway between the soaring cliffs and the river becomes of no account and is almost unnoticed except when a screaming train disturbs the silences.

There is historic lore for those who seek it hidden amongst the weather-worn crags, in the dense woods and on the fern-clad slopes — Indian trails and traces of old stage-coach roads, mounds from whose recesses weapons and other relics have been excavated, and the cave which was one of Black Hawk's favourite look-out posts, while, down below amongst the islands and the marshlands, the shadows of La Salle, Marquette, Dubuque, Pike and many another rover still haunt the river.

Next day I reached Rock Island, situated at the junction of the Mississippi and Rock Rivers. Rock Island, Davenport, Moline and East Moline form the 'Quad Cities'. Half of the residential section of Rock Island lies upon a wooded bluff, a hundred and fifty feet high: the remainder, together with the business and industrial districts, occupies a plain sloping gently to the Mississippi.

The story of Rock Island is a particularly rich one, full of dramatic figures — explorers, soldiers, frontiersmen, river captains, aggressive merchants and manufacturers. Its strategic position was, in the main, responsible for many of the events associated with its past. The possession of the island gave a sure grip on the river and, during the war of 1812-1814, it was fortified by the British.

During the gold rush to California Rock Island was a favourite point for crossing the Mississippi because of its superior facilities in the way of ferry accommodation. The first bridge to span the river, built of wood in 1856, was regarded by different members of the community with very different feelings. Those who wished to go from one side of the river to the other hailed it with glee: ferry-men and men sailing up and down the river cursed it with fury. Unfortunately, fifteen days after it was opened for traffic, a downbound steamer, the *Effie Afton*, crashed against the drawspan, caught fire and burned not only itself but a section of the bridge as well.

The owners of the *Effie Afton* sued the railway company in a famous case in which Abraham Lincoln, as counsel for the defence, argued that the right to navigate a stream was no more fundamental than the right to cross it.

There were enough of 'the biggest things in the world' to have

kept me quite a long time in Rock Island if the weather had not turned so cold and the hotels become so hot. The Secretary of the Chamber of Commerce told me that on no account ought I to leave Rock Island without seeing the Arsenal, the largest institution of its kind in the world; the locks and the roller-dam, also the largest of their kind in the world; the works of the International Harvester Company, the largest manufacturers of tractor plant in the world; and then, if I had time, I might have a look at one of the largest wagon factories in the world, at a plough factory where they could turn out ploughs at the rate of three a minute, and at the Black Hawk State Park.

As I am not much interested in machinery, and an arsenal would remind me of much that I wished to forget, I decided to see the park, for though the name of Black Hawk would revive memories of conflict, the battles all took place so long ago they could be contemplated with a fine air of detachment.

The Black Hawk War was one of those struggles once thought to be inevitable in the march of progress in America. On the one side was a native race fighting for its ancestral lands; on the other, settlers and soldiers, determined to banish the fear of the scalping knife from their cabins and clearings. The hero of the conflict, Black Hawk, chief of the Sauks and the Foxes, was born in a village part of which once stood within the limits of the park. For this village, the metropolis of his tribe, he had a deep and lasting affection, and when various other chiefs of the Sauks and the Foxes ceded the land on which it stood, he refused to recognise the cession. As years passed and white settlers pressed upon the village and its adjacent lands tension increased. In 1831 a fight seemed almost certain, but Black Hawk and his people were induced to withdraw beyond the Mississippi and to promise not to return without permission. In the spring of 1832 Black Hawk with 200 warriors and their women and children broke this promise, again crossed the Mississippi, and made for Rock Island. At once the frontier sprang to arms. The Illinois militia was called out and several regiments of U.S. Regulars were sent to the scene: amongst the officers was Abraham Lincoln. A number of sharp skirmishes culminated in the decisive defeat of the Indians at Bad Axe on August 2, 1832. A few days later Black Hawk him-

self was taken prisoner, but after a few months in custody he was permitted to return to his people in Iowa and amongst them he died in 1838.

Black Hawk was a good example of the 'noble Indian' created by the novelists. One has only to read the farewell letter he wrote to his conqueror, General Atkinson, to get some glimpse of his character.

The changes of many summers have brought old age upon me, and I cannot expect to survive many moons . . . I am now an obscure member of a nation that formerly honored and respected my opinions. The pathway to glory is rough and many gloomy hours obscure it. May the Great Spirit shed light on yours; and that you may never experience the humility that the power of the American government has reduced me to is the wish of him who, in his native forests, was once as proud and bold as yourself . . . I am now done. A few more moons and I must follow my fathers to the shades. May the Great Spirit keep our people and the white always at peace is the sincere wish of

BLACK HAWK.

The American government recognised Black Hawk's high motives after the treaty of peace was signed. Americans now regard him as one of the noblest of the Indian chiefs. A huge statue to his memory stands on a bluff not far from Oregon, Illinois, overlooking Rock River and the valley he loved so well, while the Black Hawk State Park at Rock Island is a memorial to both him and his conqueror.

The park is on the outside of the city on a steeply rolling tract of country rich in plant and bird life. It contains a museum, built of local limestone and timber, wherein is housed a fine collection of Indian relics. When the aged caretaker saw my address in the visitor's book he almost fell on my neck. 'I'm delighted to see you', he said. 'I'm Belgian. That blasted Hitler!'

I went to Arsenal Island after all. I wanted to photograph a moss-covered pier, the sole remnant of the wooden bridge to which I have referred. When I told the guardian at the entrance to the Arsenal grounds what I wanted to do, he replied 'You can't take no pictures in 'ere.' I left this ungrammatical representative of law and order and strolled over to the Clock Tower Building, the headquarters of the Rock Island district of army engineers who

have charge of the 'nine-foot' channel programme on the Upper Mississippi. I was granted, without any formality, an immediate interview with Captain Matthews, the chief of the corps. My object in visiting him was, of course, to see if I could travel on the Mississippi on one of the boats belonging to the engineers.

The captain was courtesy itself, discoursed for nearly an hour on the history and behaviour of the river but told me it would be impossible for me to get any form of transport on it before I reached St. Louis and perhaps not then. He gave me an address in St. Louis at which to make enquiries and wished me luck.

So, back to the bus and on through the unprepossessing-looking town of Davenport. The temperature, which, an hour before had been only twelve degrees above freezing point suddenly began to rise. The driver took off his coat, extracted a coat-hanger from a small case and hung the coat over the window to my left thus shutting out a great deal of the view.

'Go by bus and see more', advertise the coach-lines.

We soon left behind us elevators, quarries and cement works and re-entered the corn fields. When we arrived at Muscatine it was two o'clock and I was hungry. As the bus would not wait long enough for me to lunch I left it and let it roll away. There would be another in twenty-four hours and I liked the look of Muscatine.

In the cool of the evening I sought the water-front. Moored to the river bank was a small sloop. I asked a man who owned it and he replied 'Sea Scouts from down the river'. Now I carried a letter of introduction to all Scout officials in the United States given me by my friend James West, then the Chief Executive of the American Boy Scouts Association. I was on that boat inside three minutes. I saluted, Scout fashion, a lad peeling potatoes. His reply was a bewildered stare.

'Isn't this a Sea Scout boat?'

'No, sir. It belongs to the Naval Reserve.'

'Where is it going?'

'Up stream.'

I hid my chagrin and continued my ramble. I spied a shanty boat. Smoke was coming out of a funnel; some washing was drying on a line. Presently a freckled, shabbily-dressed individual appeared on deck, climbed some steps and came ashore.

'If I bought that boat would you navigate it to New Orleans for me?' I enquired.

'Depends', was the reply of its Danish owner.

'How much?'

'Five hundred dollars for the boat, my wages and my keep.'

'Five hundred dollars! That's more than a hundred pounds in English money! Can't afford it.'

Just then the skipper's wife, a strapping young female, appeared. Jokingly I asked 'Would you throw in your wife with the boat?'

'Missis', called the man, 'I've just been offered a hundred pounds for the boat if I sell you with it. What about it?'

'Well you can tell the cheeky guy I ain't for sale.'

The man was quite interested in the idea of sailing to New Orleans in his floating home. 'If it wasn't so near the fishing season darned if I wouldn't make the trip', he said. And then we fell to talking of fishing in the Mississippi and I learned that he caught chiefly carp and buffalo, the latter in this case being a fish and not a beast, and sent his catch to Chicago where carp fetched two cents a pound and buffalo ten cents.'

'But if they was cooked', he commented, 'and put side by side on two plates, you couldn't tell no difference by the taste. And say, mister, there ain't no fish in the Mississippi as comes up to plaice from the North Sea. There ain't no fish, nowhere, like plaice for taste or for beauty. Just look at the spots on its back.'

Then he called my attention to the sunset. The sky was a series of horizontal rainbow-tinted lines and the river was a mirror that reflected and doubled their glory.

'You ever heard of Mark Twain?' asked the fisherman. 'Well he lived here once and he had a lot to say about the sunsets of Muscatine but he don't ever say anything about the sunrises.'

In the morning I strolled up the hill and into a field of corn where the farmer was tossing golden cobs into a mule-drawn cart. He was as eloquent as the fisherman but his subject was corn — sweet corn, pop corn and just — corn. I learned a lot about corn before I left him to take some photographs attended by a very playful puppy which would keep lying down in front of me, rolling on his back and asking me to tickle his tummy.

At the corner of a road I stopped to look at a dozen or more zinc letter boxes arranged on a horizontal shelf for the reception of the mail of a number of houses lying off the road.

'What you looking at?' asked a woman who was digging a patch of garden near a cottage. She was very rotund, massively buttressed and very red in the face. I explained my interest in the letter boxes and, in turn, asked 'What are you digging?'

'Pea nuts. You're English you are. Grow any pea nuts in England? My father was an Englishman. Came from Basingstoke.'

I replied that I knew Basingstoke and had eaten monkey nuts as we call them in England, but that we did not grow them. She then took up the conversation with a discourse on pea-nuts, how they grow and what they are good for.

David Grayson says that 'In every least thing upon the road side lurks the stuff of adventure'. It is equally true that, to a wandering Englishman in America, every humble person by the way-side is at least a paragraph and sometimes a page out of a fascinating encyclopaedia.

## CHAPTER XIV

### MUSCATINE TO ST. LOUIS

FROM Muscatine we rolled away through more corn country — oceans of corn. We went up and down low hills; from the summit of every hill could be seen vast areas of flattish land, gold where the grain was still standing, grey where it had been cut and cattle were feeding on the stalks, or black where it had recently been ploughed for the planting of some small grain crop which would keep the farmer's teams and his hired man busy when corn was no longer needing his attention.

We crossed the Iowa River, very wide but shallow and showing broad banks of shining sand. Then came Skunk River. Some of the names bestowed by the earlier settlers are often more descriptive than flattering — Skunk River, Fever River, Smallpox Creek and the like.

Beyond Fort Madison the valley of the river widened and the bluffs retreated, but the corn remained in innumerable shocks marching across the plain between the distant bluffs like the hosts of Israel crossing the floor of the Red Sea. Here and there the scene was diversified by melon patches, fruit orchards and vegetable gardens.

Again the river became a lake — forty miles long and over three miles wide — fringed with shallow marshes. Above its smooth surface rose ghostly groves of dead timber whose bleached trunks marked obliterated shore lines. The dam responsible for this lake, at Keokuk, has a lock one-third greater than any lock on the Panama Canal but it did not interest me very much. My interest in dams was beginning to fade: there were so many of them. Besides I was aching to reach Hannibal.

Why Hannibal?

The history of Hannibal as a settlement dates no farther back than 1817 and the town owes its fame not to any pioneers or missionaries but to Samuel L. Clemens, the Mississippi pilot known



all over the world as Mark Twain. Sam's father, a Virginian, a man of education, a lawyer and a dreamer, moved to Hannibal in 1839 when the boy was four years old. Five years later he bought the house now officially known as the Mark Twain Boyhood House.

Sam was not twelve years old when his father died and he was apprenticed to the publisher of the local paper, *The Courier*, to learn the printing trade. In later life he was, by turns, a steamboat pilot, thus realising his chief boyish ambition, a newspaper reporter, gold miner, promotor and writer. As a writer he did more than any other man to popularise the Mississippi but, in reality, he was never greatly interested in the river and was, as he admits in his writings, not a good pilot. The river figures prominently in only three of his works — *Tom Sawyer*, *Huckleberry Finn* and *Life on the Mississippi*. These, however, it must be admitted, are three of his most popular works.

The chance to visit his house attracted me, both on account of my boyhood admiration of Tom and Huck and also because I had had the pleasure of meeting Mark Twain on his last visit to England. On the day of his

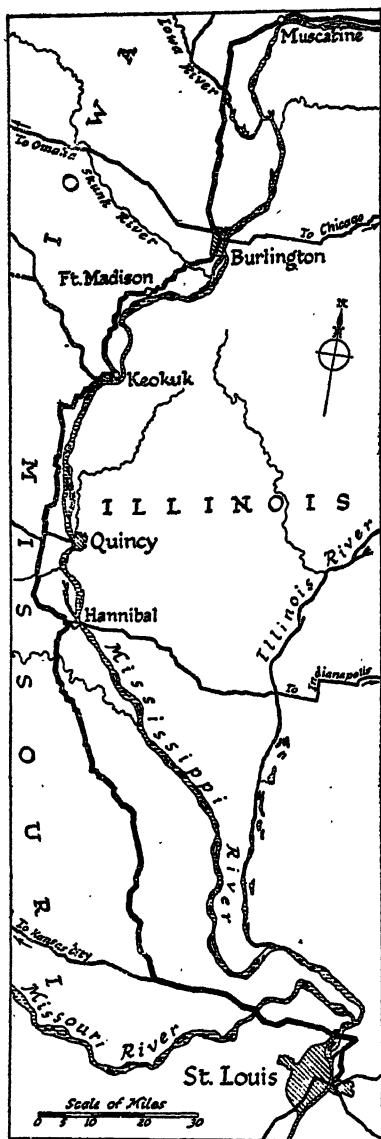


Fig. 22. Muscatine to St. Louis

arrival occurred another incident of public interest and the

placard of one London evening newspaper bore the double announcement —

### MARK TWAIN ARRIVES ASCOT CUP STOLEN

His boyhood home is a little five-roomed, white-painted, wooden structure with green doors and shutters. Here he grew up and, in the story, here lived Tom with Mary, Aunt Polly, and the cat that did not like Pain Killer. On one side of it a fence claims to be that which Tom so generously allowed to be white-washed by his friends. In the rear of the building, leading to a second-story room, is the outside stairway down which Tom crept at night when Aunt Polly imagined he was fast asleep.

Connected with the house is a little museum built of stone. Both house and museum are filled with rare books, original manuscripts, furniture, clothing, statuary and other things once owned by Mark or some of his contemporaries. In a glass case is the scarlet gown he wore when the University of Oxford presented him with the degree of Doctor of Letters. By the side of it is a photo, taken at the wedding of his daughter, in which he is seen wearing the robe as a wedding garment, 'at his daughter's request'.

Thence to the foot of Cardiff Hill (Holliday Hill of the books), where a statue of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn is set to remind the visitor that this spot was the rendezvous of the author and his play-mates. A local guide-book states that the statue is the 'First monument in the history of the world to be erected in memory of literary characters'. I doubt the truth of this statement but I cannot contradict it.

I next trudged some two miles uphill to the Riverview Park, beautiful with trees and shrubs all now tinted with the hues of the ageing year. On the highest point, overlooking the river, stands a rather sombre statue of Mark Twain: the view is better than the statue. A party of four sad-faced people in a Ford took the merest glance at the sparkling river, and an equally brief one at the statue, when one dreary member of the quartette exclaimed 'Let's go. There's nothing to see up here but the view.'

The stories of *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn* are both laid

in Hannibal and the surrounding country, and many of the incidents are founded on actual happenings at definitely known points. The local Chamber of Commerce, having discovered the financial value of Mark Twain's memory and associations, has identified these points and marked them. Hence I had no difficulty in finding the cave in which Tom and Becky were lost and the gold was buried, the site of the old swimming hole, Jackson Island where Tom the Black Avenger of the Spanish Main, Huck the Redhanded and Joe Harper the Terror of the Seas went to become pirates. It was quite easy to see that the neighbourhood, with its towering hills, far-reaching stretches of woods, caves with dark alleys and damp-walled chambers, and a river with bays, tributary streams, picturesque steam boats, wooded islands, fishing and swimming, was a perfect paradise for adventurous boys, and an ideal location for the rearing of a man with a gift for telling stories.

Hannibal thrives on memories of Mark Twain. There is a Mark Twain Hotel, a Mark Twain Lighthouse and a Mark Twain Bridge. The bars sell Mark Twain cocktails; the stores offer Mark Twain shirts, Mark Twain steaks and Mark Twain milk. Apart from Mark Twain there is nothing to distinguish Hannibal from many of the other small riverside towns. But it gave me a real thrill. It took me back to my own boyhood days when I had slept in a bed, sat on chairs and eaten at a table just like those shown in Mark's house and had, in the interval between getting into bed and sleeping, ventured and dared, in spirit, with the boys of his creation.

My way from Hannibal to St. Louis was still through an undulating corn country, for the state of Missouri is also in the Corn Belt. There was, however, much more woodland, and limestone cliffs rose high and steep by the side of the road or cropped up in the middle of some of the fields.

My seat companion in the bus was a young woman who, in answer to my questions, explained that the haystacks had wooden poles tied to them with wire to prevent their being blown away by the winds of winter, and that the straw from the threshing of wheat and oats was heaped over a frame work to make a winter shelter for the cattle and, at the same time, provide them with

food. She also pointed out the winter wheat, just pushing its head above the ground and told me stories of life on a Missouri farm.

Mile after mile we traversed farm lands, a huge chess board of yellow and black, dotted with fat red silos and magnificent barns, inhabited by staunch, individualistic farmers who study at agricultural colleges, make sacrifices for cooperative ventures and poll a heavy vote in defence of their industry. The only settlements were small places where the houses could be counted in tens or even mere filling stations at road junctions. All this is characteristic of those parts of North America where development has been carried out under the homestead system, one man to a farm and each farmhouse a mile from the next. In the past this dispersed type of settlement has caused much social inconvenience but in these days the radio and the motor car have done much to ease the situation, and community centres, based on the school, are being established.

The girl by my side was typically American in that she thought her own state the finest in the Union. She had travelled widely; she had seen Florida and California, but neither of them, she assured me, was to be compared with Missouri. As we neared the edge of the plateau she pointed to a thick pall of smoke smothering the valley below; 'That's St. Louis', she said. 'There's only one other smokier town in America — Pittsburgh.'

From the best residential quarters, above the smokiest limits, we descended one of the stream-eroded valleys amongst factories and warehouses towards the foundries near the river. In this industrial section interest is centred in boots, shoes, and tobacco and, most of all, in agricultural implements for use in the vast farming empire of the Middle West. Such bulky things as huge ploughs, giant reapers and threshers are most economically made near the places where they are to be employed in order to save expensive transport.

On the dressing table in my bedroom at the hotel there was a folder which opened with a message from the Mayor. 'I bid you welcome to our great city which lies close to the warm heart of America. St. Louis is at the cross roads of the nation. In our city all sections meet and blend. Geographically we are at the centre of the nation. Snows drift to our gates on the north; cotton fields

whiten our borders on the south; bracing winds, laden with messages from industry and culture, sweep into our windows or the east; and gentle zephyrs, perfumed with the aroma of farm lands and forests, fan our cheeks from the west. People have gathered in our city from all sections and climes, representing every race, creed, party, social sentiment and economic interest. Here will you find your friends and cousins from whatever State you come.

'It is our boast that we have garnered into the character of our citizenship something of the best of every section. We claim the typical St. Louisan to be the ideal American; that he has the hospitality of the Southland in his soul; the strength of the Northland in his sinews; the light of the East in his eyes; and the glow of the West on his brow.

'We bid you welcome, thrice welcome: hang up your hats and make yourselves at home.'

Good. Let us make ourselves at home. We may not be quite as enthusiastic as the Mayor but we shall be very dull if we cannot be interested in the city of St. Louis.

I first sought the waterside, the natural location from which to begin any exploration of St. Louis because it was the position of the site with regard to the waterways of America which first gave it prominence. Figure 23 shows that St. Louis stands very near the centre of America's navigable waterways, once the most important commercial roads of the country. They were busy even when the only power was manpower which wielded huge oars, strained with tow-ropes and drove ahead with poles.

In the days of the steamboat the riverside was alive with hurrying drays and crowds of shouting mates and singing negro roustabouts loading and unloading the scores of river craft tied nose in to their respective landing places. White men, brown men, black men and mules swarmed up the levee from the water's edge to the warehouses among bales of cotton, kegs, casks, boxes, hogsheds and crates. St. Louis was then the indisputable centre of the United States and from it almost endless processions of steamboats fanned out in all directions, their two tall funnels belching thick black columns seemingly supporting the roof of smoke over the city.

When the railways came, about 1850, they gave a death-blow to the river transport but not to St. Louis. The old packets, one by one, went out of existence, but St. Louis simply gained a new impetus and grew in size, wealth and importance, as an ever-



Fig. 23. St. Louis as the centre of American waterways

increasing proportion of western products found its way east by rail instead of south by water.

I walked down to the levee, here paved with cobbles, there coated with concrete, sloping steeply enough to deal with a thirty-foot rise and fall of the river. I was looking for possible transport for myself but I saw nothing that promised to be of any use: the only visible craft were a shabby excursion boat, a few barges, and a big, squat floating structure on the side of which, in huge letters was painted SHOW BOAT. Was it a real one?

A young man was leaving it to come ashore.

'Is that a genuine showboat?' I asked. 'I thought they had all disappeared.'

'No', he replied, 'there are still three. This one has been tied up here for the last two years and there are two others lower down the river that move from place to place. This is the oldest of the three.' He told me that it was the showboat of Edna Ferber's novel and that she had lived and travelled on it for some time to get the right atmosphere for her book. But Edna Ferber in her autobiography says that the boat on which she lived was destroyed by fire.

The young man took me on board. At the end of the gang plank was a porch-like deck with pillars supporting its roof. On one side was the booking office: in the centre was a wide doorway leading into the entrance hall which gave access not only to the pit and stalls but also to a stairway leading to an enormous gallery. This gallery came well out over three quarters of the floor space below so that those in the back seats could scarcely see or hear. The unpadded, tip-up seats had once been veneered with some red painted wood but this was now either gone or cracked. The walls had once been white and decorated with gilded ornaments but the white was soiled and the gilt was tarnished. On a raised platform to the right and left of the main aisles were better chairs in fenced enclosures representing boxes. The drop-curtain had more cracks than paint, another distressing evidence of vanished glory. The floor of the stage, having to conform to the structure of the boat, had a gentle concave curve. In the orchestral pit, on the top of the piano, stood an amplifier to make hearing easier at the back of the theatre. By the side of the stage was a notice crudely painted in red on a piece of crumpled cardboard, 'After the Show visit 905. Liquor Stores'. The dressing rooms were about as big as small box-rooms, dimly lit and badly furnished.

All the company lived on the upper deck and most of it seemed to be married — an arrangement making for economy in space. Living and working together on a small boat for two or more years must put a great strain on good nature, but all those members of the caste to whom I was introduced seemed merry and carefree and quite content with showboat life.





names of every state in the Union. The stage and back-stage are enormous and the various properties are of the same proportions.

Not far away is the Jefferson Memorial Building where one wing has been almost entirely given up to the marvellous collection of gifts which an admiring world laid at the feet of Lindbergh after his historic flight across the Atlantic. There are over five thousand offerings, tributes from forty-seven nations.

Three quarters of a mile to the south-west, but in the same park, is the Art Museum where I lingered a long time, especially in the Print Room. There were so many works by Frank Short, Muirhead Bone, Griggs, Strang and other British artists and so many representations of familiar scenes — Egham Lock, Richmond Park, the Yorkshire Dales, the Sussex Downs, the Scottish Highlands — that I grew quite homesick: the pleasant places were all so far away and the land was no longer at peace.

As I was leaving, an attendant said, briefly — ‘English?’

‘Yes’, I replied.

‘Well I’m Welsh.’

And then he told me how, when he was a young man, he used to go on Saturday nights to sing at some Welsh chapel in London. Lloyd George, not then M.P., used to talk and ‘we had barrels of fun.’ So I told him how during the Boer War, when Lloyd George, disguised as a policeman, fled from an infuriated mob at Birmingham, he took shelter for the night in the home of one of my relatives.

‘All this’, said my Welshman, ‘makes me think of home. And it’s funny too. You’re from London and I’m from Carnarvon and here we are talking about Lloyd George in the middle of the Mississippi valley.’

At night I kept my promise to go to the Show Boat to see *The Drunkard*, one of those old-fashioned melodramas, with more morals than art, which this boat makes a feature of presenting. The following night the play was to be *The Murder in the Red Barn*.

The theatre would, I suppose, seat five or six hundred people but there were not a hundred present. On the whole the audience was a well-dressed crowd that came in cars and sat in the best seats. The crowd was the one genuinely unreal thing about the

performance. It had come, of set purpose, to guy the actors. The hooting, clapping, booing and stamping were not really provoked by anything happening on the stage. Together with the whistling and the catcalling they were inspired by an alcoholic idea of a joyous evening. There was a certain amount of back-chat, occasionally amusing, between audience and actor. For instance, when the drunkard was taking a long pull at his flask, some one called out 'Give Cripps (the villain) a drop.' When the lights went out and kept out for several minutes the merry makers struck matches and bade the players 'Keep smilin'.' At times, one or more of the audience would crawl into the orchestral pit and pretend to be the conductor or attempt to beat the drum. The gaiety was too forced to be funny and the laughter of the women was a vulgar shriek.

As a matter of fact the performance was funny enough in itself. The actors had developed a very efficient technique. They played the story seriously but with just sufficient exaggeration of action and accent to make it a delicious burlesque.

Financial limitations imposed certain economies. 'Props' were very few. To effect a change from one cottage to another, there was no change of scenery, merely a change in the curtains over the window, the position of the table, and the colour of the cloth that covered it. To keep the company as small as possible and so cut down the pay roll, everybody had to be versatile. Thus there were no definite orchestral performers: for the overture three members of the caste, already made up for their parts, distributed music with a drum, fiddle and piano. The drummer (who was also the juvenile lead and, I believe, the producer) and the fiddler left just before the curtain rose and the pianist finished alone. When incidental music was necessary some one came down to play it and nobody bothered whether it was the hero or the villain. Everything was as open and simple as in a show produced and given by little children.

Between the acts there were 'turns' — a violin solo, songs and dances, performances on the xylophone, the Swiss hand bells and a one-stringed fiddle, and some hearty community singing of *There is a Tavern in the Town* and *The Dashing Young Man on the Flying Trapeze*.

When the show was over I foregathered with crew and company and together we drank coffee on the deck. The lights from a nearby bridge shed spangles on the muddy river; the show boat's dog chased rats along the quay; and until a late hour I listened to stories of the gay days of old when the show boat was a thing of romance and the audiences were credulous souls who took the hero and the heroine to their hearts.

On Friday October 20 I suddenly remembered that, on the following Sunday I should be seventy years of age. How should I celebrate the day? Being seventy is not really a reason for a joyous celebration. I felt like H. G. Wells (who once taught me zoology!) when he was entertained by his admirers on the occasion of his seventieth birthday. Said he, 'I hate being seventy . . . Tonight I am very much in the position of a little boy at a lovely party, who has been given quite a lot of jolly toys and who has spread his playthings about on the floor. Then comes his nurse. 'Now Master Bertie', she says, 'it's getting late. Time you began to put away your toys.'

'I don't in the least want to put away my toys. I hate the thought of leaving. Life is not half long enough for my tasks. Few of my games are nearly finished and some I feel I have hardly begun.'

However, while there's life there's hope. Commodore Vanderbilt added a hundred million dollars to his fortune after he was seventy; Cato began to study Greek and Goethe completed *Faust* at eighty; Titian was only two years short of a hundred when he painted the *Battle of Lepanto*.

What could I do? I could make another attempt to get aboard a boat on the Mississippi. I went first to the offices of the Mississippi Valley Association. The secretary was away and would not be back for a week but his deputy sent me, with a letter of introduction, to the Manager of the Federal Barge Line. He received me kindly but explained that it was practically impossible to grant me what I wanted without a reference to Washington, and that would take time. I sat quite still and listened while he talked, but when he paused I shot out 'Sir, please, I'll be seventy on Sunday. Can't you let me travel on a tow boat to celebrate the event?'

He smiled sympathetically and said, 'Well, perhaps that does

make a difference. Look here. I've a boat, the *Herbert Hoover*, leaving St. Louis on Monday. It's the only boat in our fleet with a cabin to spare and it is going only as far as Memphis but I'll take you as a guest as far as Memphis — if you can get anyone else to carry you from Memphis to New Orleans. Go over the road to the office of the Mississippi Barge Line and see if they'll do anything for you.'

Over the road I went. I saw an official who said, 'We don't carry passengers. We can't carry passengers and we won't carry passengers.' Then I told him about my birthday and extolled the courtesy of the Federal Barge Line, and at last he said 'Well, as I told you, we don't carry passengers but if you won't tell anybody my name and get me bothered with other applications, we will carry you, as a guest, from Memphis to New Orleans.'

I did not wait till Sunday to drink the health of my benefactors and wish myself Many Happy Returns of the Day.

'Few of my games have nearly finished and some have hardly begun.'

## CHAPTER XV

### DOWN THE MISSISSIPPI ON A TOW BOAT

#### *St. Louis to New Orleans*

ON the Saturday I went to get the necessary passes and instructions. I didn't feel too certain, even then, that my luck had changed. The passes, however, were duly forthcoming. I stowed them in my innermost pocket, in the lining of my waistcoat, walked on air, was nearly run over three times, and was loudly cursed by the owners of cars for my merry dodging between the wheels.

The pass of the Federal Barge Line ran — 'This is a free pass, issued as a gratuity only, and based upon no consideration whatsoever. The person accepting and using this pass, in consideration of receiving the same, agrees that the Inland Waterways Corporation, or any of its subsidiaries, shall not be liable under any circumstances, whether of negligence of its or their agents or others, for any injury to the person or for any loss or damage to the property of the individual using this pass and that as to such individual each such company shall not be considered a common carrier or liable as such.

'I hereby assent to the above statements and conditions and I hereby certify that I belong to one of the classes that are permitted to receive free transportation under the Statutes of Congress and of the several States wherein the pass is good: and I agree that I will not use this pass at any time in violation of the law.'

I had no idea who were the classes permitted to receive free transportation but I signed with glee.

'Be on board on Monday morning at eight', were my instructions. Being wise in the ways of freight boats I had no belief that the *Herbert Hoover* would sail to time, but I was taking no risks and arrived at the wharf at half past seven. Because the river was low the boat lay deep down below the top of the levee. I descended dozens of steep steps, then a ladder — a bit of a trial

as I am not very secure on ladders these days — crossed a muddy, stony bit of the sloping bank, climbed another ladder, crawled along the two-foot outer ledge of a barge, mounted some more steps and reached the *Herbert Hoover* and her skipper, Captain Smith.

The captain promptly made me welcome and put me at my ease. 'Make yourself at home', he said, 'but don't make a nuisance of yourself by falling overboard or getting hurt, and come up into the pilot house whenever you want to.' A deck hand carried my baggage to my cabin where I found not only a bed but an easy chair and a writing table; a private bathroom was attached. Within ten minutes I had shed my city clothes for shorts, a flannel shirt and sandals, and was wandering about watching the cranes gently lifting or lowering their loads, listening to the cheerful sounds of clanking chains, straining ropes and beating pistons. I was again on a real boat with no frills about it: ships were never invented to be converted into hotels. I was happy, content, even triumphant. For, be it remembered, unless you own a boat of your own or make use of one of the rare excursion boats, you must be a guest to travel on the Mississippi. I don't suppose that in the last fifty years a dozen Englishmen and very few Americans have done what I was about to do.

We left at ten, only two hours after the scheduled time, with a fine settled look on the day. The view of St. Louis from the river was not attractive. Sewers, one after the other, pouring out foul streams from their giant mouths into the water, chimneys pouring out foul clouds of smoke into the air, colossal machinery dredging sand from the river for the making of cement, and a colony of 'water rats' housed in hovels constructed of rusty tin and other scraps collected from refuse dumps were the most significant details in the picture.

The city is trying to get rid of the human derelicts on the river banks and has passed a law forbidding the spending of any money on repairing the hovels in which they live. If rain comes through a hole in the roof the occupant of the dwelling may catch the water in a pan: he must not mend the hole.

'How do these people make a living?' I asked.

'By begging, stealing, killing — anything but work', said the

captain, adding however, 'there must be some good in some of them. See that shed yonder where one wall has gone and the roof is partly resting on the ground. Well that place is full of pets. There's only an old man there but he's got cats, dogs, rabbits, monkeys, parrots and I don't know what else. There must be some good in him.'

Just before noon the musical sound of a gong was heard. 'What's that?' I asked hopefully, for the river air had sharpened my appetite.

'It's the 'ash 'ammer, Sir', said the mess-boy with a grin. 'In fifteen minutes you eat.'

Later on the mess-boy confided to me that when he had saved enough money he was going to the university to study Civil Engineering. His dropped h's were his little joke. His position on the boat was far different from what it would have been on any other craft in any other part of the world. For instance, when he came up to the pilot house in the afternoon to bring us tea, he would sit down, join in the conversation and call the pilot by his Christian name. He was as much at home as any of us. We were a very democratic society. Everybody was Alf or Joe except the skipper who was 'cap' to his face and, true to the traditions of life afloat, 'the old man' behind his back.

The meal hours were fixed to meet the watches of the crew, not the convenience of an occasional guest. They were 6 a.m., noon, and 6 p.m. Coffee and sandwiches and other items were served at nine in the morning and three in the afternoon or at any other time when anybody wanted a bite. I have never been a believer in early rising and, at first, found it a little difficult to leave my bed at half past five, but I soon became accustomed to this unhealthy custom, and even managed to persuade myself that the hues of the early morning were delights I ought not to miss.

While on this question of meals I may add that the food was plentiful and excellent, and that I never saw any body of men eat so quickly and say so little as the crews of the three tow boats which carried me to New Orleans.

The name 'tow boat' is not strictly accurate. The American tow boat does not pull barges; it pushes them, locked into a solid mass by heavy ropes and cables. The appearance of the

boat and its barges resembles that of a hen driving her chickens.

The modern tow boat came into being during the World War of 1914-1918. The rail service broke down; the government decided to relieve the congestion by reviving the long unused waterways. With the return of peace a definite policy was conceived of developing river transport. A standard nine-foot channel was adopted, flood control was undertaken, and modern equipment was designed.

The *Herbert Hoover*, like most of the other tow boats, was built of steel and as flat bottomed as a packing case. She was a stern-wheeler with engines as powerful as those of many an ocean-going vessel but drew only seven and a half feet of water. Each of the larger barges clustered ahead of us could carry as much as sixteen loaded freight trains but ours were not full. We pushed a total cargo of about 6,000 tons made up chiefly of flour, oats, corn, soya beans, beet pulp, drums of oil, tin-plate, iron pipes, sheet steel, steel billets, tools and implements.

The ease with which the captains of the tow boats put the barges together, change the position of them in the tow, add a few, drop a few, rearrange the whole — three barges wide for better steering where the river runs fast, two barges wide to gain speed in slack water and so on — was a wonder to behold. The operation is comparable to that of shunting railway trucks, but the railway man does his job on fixed rails and not on a floating stream which means to have a say in the matter. The engine-driver, moreover, bumps his trucks against each other roughly and noisily: the tow boat skipper shifts his barges so quietly and smoothly that their meeting is as gentle as a mother's kiss.

It is said that the modern barges carry more freight than was ever carried by the old packets. The usual tow consists of from four to ten barges each of 1,000 to 2,000 tons capacity, and it was quite evident that the total amount of freight afloat was considerable. But there is no romance, no gay life aboard a tow boat as there was on the packet in the days of Mark Twain.

In those days the trip from St. Louis to New Orleans, then a voyage of about 1200 miles was, to the passengers, quite as full of excitement as an ocean voyage on a modern liner. Seated in their chairs on the hurricane deck the men smoothed down their



silky handle-bar moustaches and flirted with the voluminously-skirted, leg-of-mutton-sleeved young ladies or listened to the bearded skipper spinning yarns. In the saloons there was much gambling for heavy stakes and much drinking, the latter increasing as the boat passed from northern coolness to southern mildness and then into the full heat of the lands of sugar and cotton. Steam navigation on the Mississippi is now nothing but a stern business proposition and there are no passengers except an occasional vagabond like myself or some other privileged trespasser.

I spent most of my time either on the deck or in the pilot house. The latter was perched high up in the air and was reached by steep narrow steps. Curled up comfortably on a broad settee I watched, from this gay, roomy, glass-walled vantage point, hundreds of miles of the tawny river coil and uncoil itself like some vast extended writhing serpent. And I must put it on record that once for a few minutes I was allowed to steer the boat. I wonder how many other living Englishmen have ever steered a tow-boat on the Mississippi!

As we passed beyond the limits of the city of St. Louis great expanses of golden sand began to appear. They remained with us all the way to Baton Rouge in the far south. The river, in 1939, was lower than it had been for forty years, and in parts of its course there was as much sand as water. In the more dangerous passages between the shoals we went very slowly, like a timid person cautiously crossing stepping stones, with one man flinging the lead and another, on the prow of the foremost barge, bawling through a megaphone the changing depth of the water. 'Mark twa-ain', he called in a kind of melancholy chant meaning that there were twelve feet of water: every *mark* is a fathom or six feet. Once the cry came 'Ei-ght fee-eet'. There was a sudden signal to the engineer, a harsh grinding sound on the bottom and, with a shiver like that of a frightened animal, we went aground at the mouth of the River Oka.

There we remained for three hours while the pilot on duty executed various manoeuvres which I did not understand and about which I asked no questions. The captain and the other pilots were also silent. The rule in such cases is that the pilot on

duty is in sole charge; no one offers him any advice unless he expresses a wish for it.

I asked for a chart: without maps I am lost. The skipper handed me a complete set of charts of the river saying, as he did so, 'Here you are. Charts a-plenty. But charts are no use on the Mississippi. You have to learn to read the water.' The channel shifts almost daily in ordinary times and almost hourly in time of flood. The charts are of greater academic than practical interest. More valuable are the reports issued at frequent intervals by the United States Engineers calling attention to present conditions.

Here is an extract from one of these reports. All its terms may not be intelligible to the reader, but the fact that the given passage is merely one of a dozen lines from a report ten pages in length of foolscap, single spaced typing, will serve to show something of the difficulty of piloting a boat down this treacherous river.

**MADRID BAR AND HAPTONSTALL** — 9 feet. From Morrison Towhead Lower Light to Madrid Bar Light, 11 feet, between 4 black and 4 red buoys. Till from foot of Morrison Towhead to 100 yards above Haptonstall Light, 14 feet, to right of 2 red buoys. Then from 25 yards below Madrid Bar Light to 50 yards open on Kentucky Point Lower Light, 11 feet, between 2 red and 2 black buoys; black turning buoy in 11 feet. Left-hand draft in this set. Till from Morrison Towhead Lower Light which will show 100 yards open on Kentucky Point Light to Haptonstall Light, 10 feet, between 4 red and 6 black buyos, red turning buoy in 8 feet. Slight right-hand draft in this set. In and down shape of revetment 75 yards off, 9 feet, to right of 4 red buoys. Very close and strong set below Haptonstall Light.

These were the conditions on one short stretch on October 9th. But they would not necessarily be true on October 10th and the pilot knew they would almost certainly not be the same when he returned; the river is as wayward as a fickle woman. One day we received a wireless message to say a new channel had opened and the old one closed within the previous three days.

Everywhere the river is constantly eating into its banks on one side and depositing them on the other. 'With a simple lash of its tail, it could wipe a solid island from the face of the earth or with a convulsion of its huge tawny body spew up a tract of land

where only water had been.' A man may see his farm gradually disappearing, either going away down stream or building up that of his neighbour on the opposite shore. 'Now', said one farmer, as the last of his fields slid into the current, 'I'm the greatest landowner in U.S.A. I've a farm that stretches from Tennessee to Louisiana', but he did not smile. Some one was always saying to me, 'That used to be an island', 'That was the channel we took last trip' or last year.

The memory of the pilots with regard to the river is encyclopaedic. There is nothing about the behaviour of the bewildering current they do not know. Currents, depths, landings, banks, reefs, sandbars, eddies, despite their fickle character, are as familiar to the Mississippi pilot as the alleys and byways of London are to a London taxi-driver.

Navigation is difficult enough during the day; it is much worse at night especially when the skies are dark with bitter rain and the yellow water is swirling in a frothy torrent, and still more dangerous when fog is lying low, and the scene is either devoid of any landmark or all the marks that are visible look exactly alike. As far as Cairo (pronounced Kay-ro) we tied up most nights about dusk, mooring ourselves with giant cables to trees on the banks. One night it was late before we reached a suitable anchorage and I sat in the pilot house lost in astonishment at the man who could pick out anything in the shifting black horizon which looked any different from everything anywhere else. No wonder the captains are well paid: some of them, in pre-war days, received a salary of about £ 1,000 a year.

Conversation in the pilot house was the river-man's 'shop' — the vagaries of the river, accidents to barges, triumphs of pilots and racing feuds, to which were added older stories of Indians, explorers and blood-thirsty pirates. Whenever any one spoke of the river it was always of *her*, as if she were a human being, one whom they loved and respected but whom they also feared. I once suggested the possibility of bathing from one of the sandbanks and the captain said to me 'Don't, never. She sits in wait like a spider and she always gets 'em. You walk along; you fall into a hole; an undercurrent catches you and you're done.'

The captain of the *Herbert Hoover*, having been on the river

for forty years, had a special fund of information about everybody who lived within sight of his boat or even in the country beyond, their incomes, their successes, their scandals, in short all their private affairs.

Below St. Louis there was some change in the appearance and character of the river but first on one side and then on the other rose, for several days on end, autumn-tinted limestone bluffs. In one place there had been a forest fire, and grey ashy sneers lay upon the blackened faces of the cliffs. On some of the numerous uncovered sand banks men had built brush shelters behind which they hid in order to shoot the ducks and geese migrating to the warm south for the winter. Flocks of wooden decoys floated on the waters or stuck up rigidly in the sand, and sometimes glasses were necessary to make out whether they were real birds or not.

Everywhere, on reefs and sandbanks and against projecting points in the banks, were piles of débris, stumps, dead trees, bits of fences, houses and wrecked boats which, particularly in times of flood, the churning current had brought down in a seething mass. Over much of the wreckage trees, clinging frantically to their last foothold in the crumbling bank, awaited the next season of high water to add their despairing limbs to the rotting piles below. One particularly

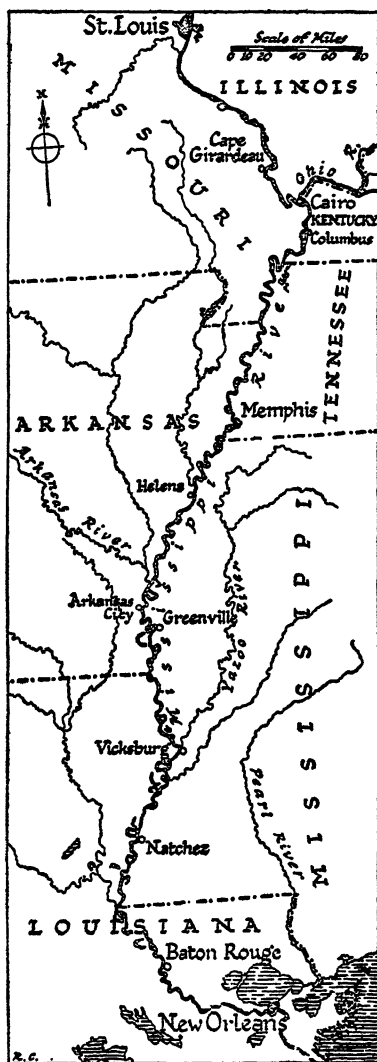


Fig. 24. St. Louis to New Orleans

bad patch of the river was littered with references to the devil — his baking oven, his table, and his footprints all on a scale in keeping with his reputation and the nature of the scene.

The greater part of the time I saw no human habitations. The river, in flood, rises high enough to drown everything between the bluffs, even though they may be from forty to a hundred miles apart, unless held back by artificial dykes or levees. No one, therefore, lives on the low unprotected shores, and the riverside is as dead as that in a tropical forest even when the land behind the levee may be thickly populated.

The engineers in charge of the river have three main problems — how to improve the navigation, how to prevent the land from being washed away and how to prevent farms and towns from being drowned. To describe their experiments and their works would take a small library.

Two or three of their efforts are, however, so conspicuous that no mention of the river can neglect them. For over four hundred miles from St. Louis there are heavy groins of timber, called *hurdles*, sticking out from both banks of the river. They look like the groins built on coasts to prevent the drift of sand and shingle. Here they collect sand and drifting timber to form an obstruction which diverts the current and sends it out towards the middle to cut the channel deeper. There are so many of these hurdles that they add a very attractive novelty to many an otherwise uninteresting mile.

Levees made of earth are built to prevent flooding. In some sections they have reduced the width of the flooded area from say fifty or even a hundred miles to as little as a mile and a half and have thus reclaimed thousands of acres for agriculture. At times, however, the river may sweep away a levee, regain control of the plain, and deluge vast areas of cultivated land. As a rule the levees are so far from the edge of the river and so masked by trees that, from a boat, little or nothing of them is visible for hundreds of miles.

When a high bluff comes close to the water and so provides its own defence against the flood there may be a town. On the third day out from St. Louis we reached such a town, Cape Girardeau, where a railway makes use of the bit of higher land

to help it to cross the river. The town had smoky chimneys, a church or other building with a dome, factories, and silvery oil tanks mixed up with trees. Behind the waterfront was the usual railway, street and promenade: in the street were a terrible 'Gothic' church, its turrets painted with aluminium, and a yellow-walled, green-roofed college surmounted by a cross. By the side of the stream a few saw mills. On the stream a barge unloading timber. And then into the wilderness again. In a straight line we were now only 600 miles from the Gulf of Orleans but we should have to travel 1700 miles before we reached it.

As the day drew towards evening a mist arose and a curtain of luke-warm rain began to fall; the search lights turned the falling drops into a gentle cascade of gilded crystals. We reached a narrow passage where the difficulties were so great that our heavy tow could not be safely navigated in the dark. The captain decided to 'double trip', that is, to split the tow in half, leave one section behind and return for it in the morning. We detached two of the barges and tied them up to trees. Three of the deck hands, one a youth in his teens, one a giant of middle age, and one an old greybeard, provided with bedding and a cold supper, went into one of the barges to keep watch for the night while we went on to Cairo at the mouth of the River Ohio with the rest of the fleet. There, with lights flickering above the levee and throwing yellow streaks across the water, we lay till dawn sent the tow boat back upstream to fetch the other boats.

Cairo (Fig. 25) is at the junction of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers and in that part of the state of Illinois which is called Egypt. These names suggest that Cairo in America should, like Cairo in Egypt, be near the head of the delta of the river and, in a sense, it is. At one time the Mississippi ran into the sea at this point. That the sea once extended so far north is proved by the ancient beaches and shore lines which occur so commonly in the hills of southern Missouri, northern Arkansas and Kentucky. The ground on which Cairo stands is low but the city is now serenely and securely settled behind the immense levees which are here close to the water.

The Ohio is itself a noble river and the sight of the two giant arteries coming together to unite their forces for the onward

march to the sea is one which has ever stirred the imagination of the traveller. All the early explorers — Hennepin, Joliet, Marquette, La Salle — make reference to it. The union, however, is not immediately complete. For some distance the clear green water of the Ohio flows side by side with the dull brown water of the Mississippi each proudly disdaining to acknowledge the existence of the other.

South of the Ohio we had Kentucky with us on the left but

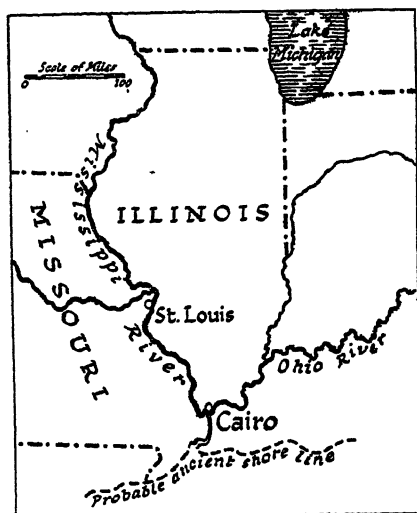


Fig. 25. The Site of Cairo

Missouri was still with us on the right. At six in the evening we tied up, as usual, this time under a high bank crowned with young cottonwoods whose bright green leaves and slender white stems shone gaily in the search lights. Low hanging clouds scurried across the face of the moon; the dark crag was outlined against the stars; a silver shimmer danced from time to time upon the muddy current.

The next day's dawn was chill. The sun, at first an angry red frown, turned to a cold yellow stare and

seemed as surprised as I was at being awake at this early hour. Then, rejoicing at its own uprising, it tried to breathe a caress into the air but the cold wind laughed and triumphed.

About sixty miles from Cairo we came to one of those terrific bends which are so conspicuous on maps of the river. The distance round the curve was twenty miles but when we had completed it we were only a little over a mile farther south than when we had entered it. The engineers want to do here what they have done in many other similar cases, dredge a cut-off across the neck of the bend and so shorten the journey. The pilots, however, object. They say there is a drop of thirteen feet between the two ends of the

bend, and the speed of the current through the cut-off would be so great they would not be able to manage their heavy tows. There is some evidence to prove that though the contemplated cut-off would produce a temporary acceleration of the current this would eventually be corrected by the current scouring out a deeper channel and thus reducing its speed. When I suggested this to the captain his anger rose and his remarks about theories, and engineers thinking in terms of text-books, were too lurid for publication.

On we went skirting a series of bluffs, passing down lanes of buoys, the red ones bobbing up and down like cheeky, drunken, inverted interrogation marks, round sandbars where prostrate, blackened tree trunks told tales of the devouring monster's activities, by apparently deserted shores clothed mistily with silver green willows, and reached the widest part of the river, some three or four miles from bank to bank. In many sections the easily eroded shores had been laboriously revetted with slabs of concrete, but these were often undermined, broken and ready to slide.

Points, promontories, islands, bends, wooded shores, and an almost constantly horizontal sky line brought us to another sunset halt and we tied up to one of the hurdles. Above us, on shore, two engineers were spending the night in a tent under some willows. Their camp fire was glowing brightly in the shadows and sending forth the long remembered faint fragrance of wood smoke under the stars. During the night, the channel we should have taken finished filling itself with sand, and we had to wait while a dredger cleared a way for us. Not till seven o'clock could we untie our mooring ropes.

Between flat, winding shores, mostly covered with willows, all low in relief and in colour, but pleasing in the cool, pearly, pastel shades of the early morning we zigzagged towards the sea. Kentucky gave way to Tennessee and the captain said 'You'll notice a difference down here. The people in the south aren't like those in the north: they're slower. I've known people as nice as you wouldn't want to know better, good church-going folk they were, but if the lawn wanted mowing they'd get a nigger to mow it, though there was an eighteen-year old son in the house, and if the



cook went out they'd go to a restaurant to eat because the woman couldn't cook a meal.'

Just above Chickasaw Bluff, one of the few points on the left bank where hills approach the river in its southern course, the river narrowed to about a quarter of a mile and gathered speed. The steep wooded cliffs of this short section are part of a series running from Columbus (Kentucky) to Memphis (Tennessee). Chickasaw Bluff has historic interest; from its summit De Soto, the Spanish discoverer of the Mississippi, first saw the river in 1541.

Then the captain called my attention to a line of black buoys. 'Where they float was last year's shore. Where you see all that sand was our channel.' All the concrete slabs which were supposed to protect the banks were under the water. There was enough sand to provide a big seaside town with all the bathing beach it could desire. The fact that in one year there could be so much diversion of water and so much accumulation of sand was as incredible as plain truth usually is.

At six, when it was already dark, the captain said to me 'You'll have to leave us here. I've just had a message to say that I'm to go no farther. This boat can't get through the channel. Another smaller boat, the *St. Louis*, is bringing me my up-stream tow and taking these barges down.'

Now I knew that the *St. Louis* had no spare room and I wondered where I should sleep. When I went on board her and suggested to Menard, my new skipper, that I could make a bed of the pilot-house settee, he replied, 'Don't you bother. I'll put you somewhere.' When bed-time came he led me to my sleeping quarters. They were his own! He had given me his cabin and was going to sleep on a bench!

Menard was somewhat different from the other captains and pilots whom I met. He was no kinder and I suppose he may not have been any more skilful but he had wider interests. He had been to sea and, overseas, he had visited and appreciated what the older world had to offer. His descriptions of Athens and Pisa were marked by knowledge and taste. In his spare time at home he kept bees; in his spare time aboard he read *Hamlet* and *King Lear*. I was with him but one night. In the morning Memphis, on

its high bluff, rose mistily in the distance. Like all the cities with sky scrapers on the sky line it presented, through the early morning haze, a view suggestive of mystery and aspiration.

To understand Memphis it must be remembered that the Mississippi, flowing north and south, is a great barrier to the natural lines of movement east and west, and a bridge crossing it is a focal point of great importance. Bridging the Mississippi, in the plain south of Cairo, is not an easy matter: the banks are very low and the river may not stay under the bridge. Between St. Louis and the Gulf of Mexico there were, until comparatively recently, only two bridges; the last of these was at Memphis. Hence this city has become the focus of ten trunk railway lines. The other bridge, at Cape Girardeau, takes nothing but rail traffic: hence Memphis is the focus of five of the great national highways. It is prevaillingly a cotton shipping port but it has, naturally, a wide variety of interests. It is the leading city in the United States for the making of cotton-seed oil and cake, while its local hardwood forests support saw-mills and the manufacture of furniture, flooring, barrels, boxes, wheels (from hickory) and boat oars (from ash).

One had no need to be told that Memphis is in the Cotton Belt. Bales of cotton lie on the sidewalks; specimens of cotton are on exhibition in office windows; porters whose clothes are fluffy with cotton fibres push trolleys and wagons loaded with cotton; people in the hotels talk cotton and a Cotton Exchange caters for merchants and speculators. There is now, however, a little less dependence than there was on cotton as the sole crop: the activities of the farmer are now more varied than they were. The modern slogan is 'Plant to Prosper' and the plants are vegetables, soya beans and feed crops, even some coffee, while the number of hogs, cattle and poultry has largely increased. There is an awakened appreciation of the wisdom of not putting all one's eggs in one basket.

The number of black men and women in the streets was evidence that I had crossed the line dividing negroes from niggers and I was not surprised to find in a public garden a little building marked 'MEN. White only'. The separation of the races extends from the churches and the schools to the public lavatories.

At Memphis I had to tranship to the tow boat *Tennessee* of the Mississippi Valley Barge Line. She was on her way from Cincinnati. I went to the office of the Company to enquire when she was due. 'She will arrive to-morrow at noon and leave almost immediately, but I'll phone.' At eleven the next morning I got a message 'The latest news I have is that she will be here at three. You will go aboard her on a tug and as she may be a little ahead of time you had better be at the wharf at two-thirty.' I arrived at two-twenty when a clerk said to me 'I'm sorry but the *Tennessee* won't be here till eight. Leave your baggage in my office and come again about half-past seven.'

I went to the movies, had my dinner, and returned at seven-thirty. There was no tug and no tow boat. At about nine a small launch arrived and carried me off. When I went to bed at half-past ten the *Tennessee* was still arranging her tow.

The *Tennessee* was by far the most luxurious of the three tow-boats on which I travelled. She had a comfortable saloon with arm-chairs, and standard lamps by which to read: the latter I did not use. I never read a single word during the whole of the journey. I was always afraid I might be missing something. The food was the best I had eaten though it was good enough on all the boats. The breakfast table was always piled with cereals, eggs, bacon, various kinds of hashes, sausages, prunes, stacks of bread, hot biscuits, hot corn bread, that is, hot if you went to breakfast in time.

The captain — Robert Haynes — was a typical river man. His father, who was just about to complete fifty years of service on the river, had begun as a steersman under the direction of his uncle in the golden days of the old packets. His three sons, of whom Robert was the second, were all engaged in carrying on the family tradition of devotion to tow boats and barges. The oldest began as a deck hand under his father. The youngest went to college and became a civil engineer but the river called him so he joined his elder brother. Robert had served under his father as clerk, steward and steersman. His people tried to discourage him and sent him to a business college but he, too, came 'home' again. The mystery, the majesty and the power of the river were in his blood.

I gathered that deck hands, as well as skippers, are also a distinct and faithful tribe. They have a hard and, at times, a dangerous life, and are given to cursing the river and everything connected with it. But they tend to stick; even if they take a job ashore they are just as likely as not to throw it up and return to their first and only permanent love.

From Memphis south, as far as the arable land extended, the farms are guarded by levees some of which run far out of sight beyond the trees.

Though signs of human occupation were scarce there was plenty of evidence of traffic and of activities connected with the river — tow boats going down with grain, cotton, iron pipes, wooden barrels, tin cases of insect poison for shipment to Mexico, and cases of whisky, or going up with sugar and rice; oil-tankers, and rafts of timber; dredgers pumping up sand and gravel, pouring the sand and water back into the river and the gravel as 'clean as washin' ' into barges.

At Helena we bade farewell to the last hills on the right bank. Below Arkansas City we went through a man-made cut-off which has left the town of Greenville high and dry, an island instead of a riverside town. Between Arkansas City and the mouth of the Red River (Fig. 26) there are twelve of these cut offs. They have shortened the Mississippi by a hundred miles and caused such an increase in speed that the crest of the great 1937 flood was ten to twelve feet lower in this section than anywhere else. The appearance of the artificial channels is quite natural and unless I had been told what they were I should never have taken them for canals that had been dredged.

On the left bank, somewhere in the state of Mississippi, I saw a number of round holes in some cliffs. They were the entrances to caves which human derelicts had themselves excavated in order to obtain rent-free habitations. On the water, looking like black rocks till the steamer's whistle disturbed them, were huge flocks of waterturkeys — 'no good to eat'. On the sandbanks, thousands of ducks migrating from Canada, and called 'honkies' because of their cries, were resting. Further south they become 'Louisiana ducks' which may be shot only at certain seasons and under a licence. If, at night, they are blinded by the search lights they

stun themselves against the masts and fall on the deck. They are then collected and cooked because 'there's no law to compel you to throw 'em overboard.'

All the time the horizon was one of straight lines — bluffs,

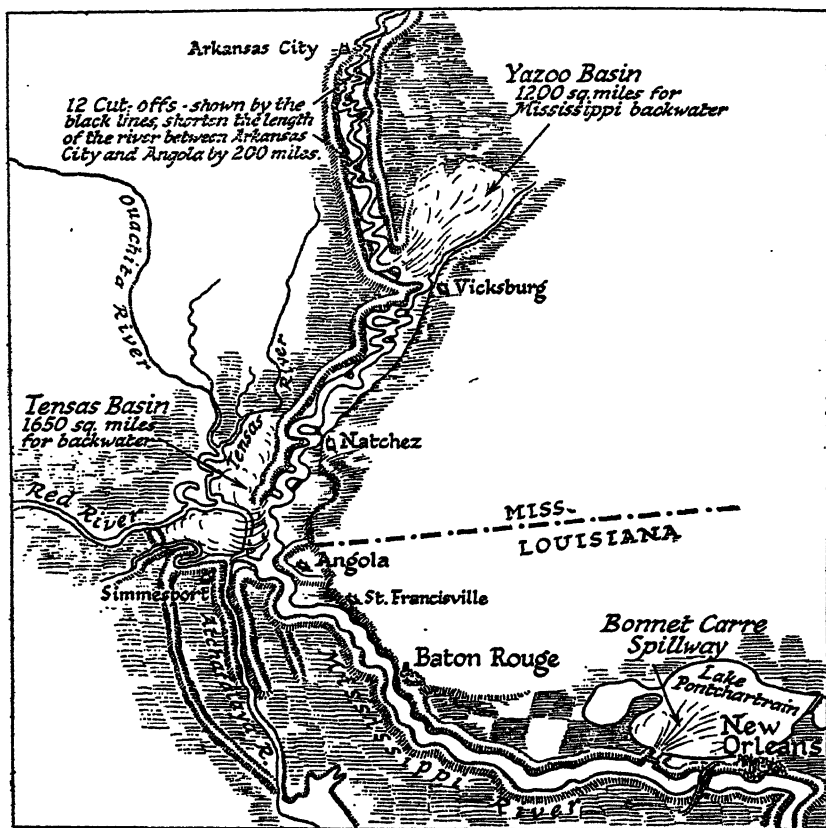


Fig. 26. Cut-offs and Levees of the Lower Mississippi

banks, sandbars and forest tops. From an aeroplane it must have been an intricate tangle of various curves — bars, bends, streams, lakes and islands.

On Nov. 2., we arrived at Vicksburg. Because it was late we stayed only long enough to cast off two barges. The lights of the city showed Vicksburg to be, like all the other riverside towns,

on high land. The map showed it to be bounded on three sides by a complicated system of hills and streams at the junction of the Yazoo and Mississippi Rivers. The captain told me that close at hand were thirty-two battlefields and a National Military Cemetery. And I read in a book an account of a huge working model of the Lower Mississippi built at Vicksburg by the United States Engineers. It covers 245 acres of ground and on it the engineers try out their theories of river control.

The *Tennessee* had so many Catholics amongst the crew that the captain had to consider the question of feeding them on the meatless Friday. At what appeared to be an uninhabited stretch of the river the pilot pulled a rope; a long piercing cry terrified the silence and we stopped. In but a few minutes a negro put off from the distant shore to bring to us a magnificent catch of fine fish. Most of it was cat-fish — so-called on account of its whiskers. As served by our bulbous-eyed, obese, woolly-haired cook, it provided a delicious dish.

We came to Natchez, on the usual cliff, here two hundred feet above the river but with a lower town on the flats known as Natchez-under-the-Hill. This lower town was once the home of certain desperadoes whose morals were as unsoundly based as the mud on which they lived. The river had recently taken another big bite deep into the shore and half swallowed a mill and some attendant buildings.

Of Natchez, as of Vicksburg, I saw nothing except from the tow boat. The same luck befel me at Baton Rouge where we moored some distance from the city to take on fuel oil and deliver a few barges. There was no chance to go ashore and I don't think I should have gone had I been given the chance. The weather had suddenly turned so cold that to leave the over-heated pilot house was to court death by freezing.

From Baton Rouge to New Orleans, a distance of about two hundred miles, the delta character of the plain of the Mississippi is apparent in the number of branches which carry 'Ole Man's' waters to their resting place in the sea. For ocean ships, drawing thirty feet of water, there is but one channel and though we needed no such depth this was the channel we took. The banks were very low; trees came down to the water's edge; the water itself

was less muddy and was salt. There were no more hills or sandbanks. I was nearing the end of the river trail. I had come from the pines of Minnesota, through the corn lands and the lands of cotton to others of rice and sugar. The chimneys of numerous sugar mills were sending their smoky offerings into the blue. Silver-spired village churches were a reminder that here, as in Quebec, the country was peopled by French Catholics.

On Guy Fawke's Day, through the mists of early morning, came the pearly sky scrapers of New Orleans rising above the flat land on which the city is built and over which it stretches for twenty miles from east to west.

The disembarking was, for me, sheer terror. There was no proper pier or landing place and the water was low. Holding tightly to the hand of one of the crew I scrambled up and along wooden beams not more than a foot wide that sloped at bad angles and turned at worse ones, the turgid stream slyly winking at my discomfiture as it dawdled on below. Had I been a paying passenger I wouldn't have risked that disembarkation. As a guest I felt I could not ask to be taken to some easier and safer landing point. It was with a feeling of the greatest relief that I found myself at last upon one of the levees which keep the water out of New Orleans. The city is, normally, from four to seven feet *below* river level and as many as eighteen to twenty feet when the water is high. I entered one of the massive ferry boats which, with slow dignity, ply between the opposite sides, and crossed to the business section of a city that claims the honour of being the 'most interesting city in North America'.

## CHAPTER XVI

### NEW ORLEANS TO THE GULF OF MEXICO

I had reached New Orleans but I had not yet finished with the Mississippi. New Orleans, like London, Glasgow and many another port of world importance, is not on the sea. I now sought transport from New Orleans to the Gulf of Mexico and back. I could easily have gone to the Gulf of Mexico on some outbound ocean steamer but then I could not have returned without completing a voyage to the West Indies, South America or some other distant part of the globe. There was no barge traffic and therefore no tow boats. I visited various tourist agencies and even one or two official bodies; they all told me the journey I wanted to make was impossible. There was, they said, no passenger traffic between New Orleans and the mouth of the Mississippi.

This seemed to me incredible. In the delta south of New Orleans there are some farms, a few villages, a pilot station, a settlement used by the engineers in charge of the navigation and quite a number of fishermen. Most of the dwellers in the swamps could not be reached either by rail or road because there was no railway and, beyond a certain distance, no road. On the face of it it was absurd to suppose they could not be reached by boat and I continued to ask everyone I met where I could find one. After about three weeks I learned that there was one small boat which made the return journey, twice a week, between New Orleans and the last human settlement on the river. I booked a passage on her.

Admittedly she was not exactly the kind of boat to which tourist agencies send clients, but she was a boat and she did carry passengers. She was a tiny affair of about 150 tons. She had been painted several times since she was first launched and, as fragments of the original and the additional layers were all visible, the colour scheme resembled that of Joseph's coat after it had faded.



There were three two-berth cabins the beds in which were covered with grey blankets which would not show the dirt, but there were no sheets. Two women and an infant occupied one of the cabins, another male passenger and myself each had one of the other two. Each cabin had two doors, one of wood with a glass upper section to let in the light and one of wire netting to keep out the insects. Half the glass in my door had been broken and its place taken by a piece of ill-fitting roughly nailed board. The wire-netted door had no knob and was opened and closed by pulling on a piece of dirty rag.

There was one 'toilet' for the use of both the passengers and the white members of the crew. The box-like refuge also contained the washing arrangements — a tap which supplied a dribble of cold water, and a tin basin in need of a severe cleansing. One towel for all remained on duty for some time, but this did not trouble me for, being a seasoned voyager, I always carry one of my own.

The deck hands were negroes who slept at night either on the deck or in a dark and dismal hold. The white crew were black-haired, black-eyed immigrants from Serbia, Dalmatia, Czechoslovakia and Italy but all naturalised citizens of the United States. They were as merry and kind a group of men as one could wish to have for company on a boat. The captain, in particular, was a solid mass of good humour, so rotund that he reminded me of a child's definition of an adult — a person who has left off growing except in the middle. All the crew spoke a variety of English, but it was so peculiar that I never could understand half of what any of them said to me. \*

I went aboard early enough to watch the loading. The freighting of a boat always fascinates me and the freighting of this one was no exception. As she was the sole public link between New Orleans and the people who live in the roadless swamps, our cargo was a very miscellaneous one ranging from sacks of coffee and barrels of oil to a laundry basket for some one who could not or would not do the family washing.

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\* If the captain ever sees this account of his boat, and I hope he never will, I beg his pardon for my remarks about it and ask him to accept my thanks for his personal attention.

About five o'clock, as the sun dropped lower and lower behind New Orleans, it shrouded the tall buildings in a golden haze, and spread one long glittering avenue of light across the broad breast of the yellow stream. Overhead floated inky black trails of soot from the funnels of steamers, ferry boats and tugs. The clouds, sculptured by a rapidly cooling breeze and headed by flaming angels, marched in a fiery procession across a sky of pale rose, green and blue, till at last their glory faded.

As the curtains of night descended the city grew grey but the stars displayed their diamonds on a canopy of black velvet, streets lights became a lower firmament, neon lights on taller buildings glared mockingly at the darkness, the lighted buoys twinkled little ripples of colour into the water, ferry boats trailed their illuminated passage from bank to bank and then, long after the time scheduled for departure, the skipper came aboard, the whistle shrieked, a white path of foam sprang up in our wake, and the cook announced that dinner was served.

The officers, the other male passenger and myself entered the dining saloon and seated ourselves at a table covered with an aged, cracked, chequer-board patterned piece of linoleum. The cook's galley was in one corner of the saloon and the negro chef, attired in orthodox cap and coat, which had once been white, prepared the meal under our noses. He was elderly, or at least as wrinkled as any elderly person ever ought to be, and had an air of wisdom on his wizened face which was not supported by the results of his culinary experiments.

The food was brought to the table in huge tin pans and washing basins — one basin of olives, another of onions, another of oysters and so on. Six oysters on their shells are an invitation: hundreds of them in a soiled tin vessel are a slimy repulsive looking mess. I had to shut my eyes before I dared taste their delicious freshness. We had gigantic slabs of meat and huge helpings of a perfect fish — the sheephead. Beans, rice, and hard ship biscuit which I could neither bite nor cut, supplied the carbohydrate element of this gargantuan meal. With it we drank vast quantities of a cheap, sour, red wine, hard to the palate and served *iced* in jugs.

The two ladies were not summoned to table until we men had finished. The sight of the luke-warm remnants soon satisfied their

desire for food; they hastily supped on a cup of coffee and a slice of dry bread and retired, hungry, to await the dawn.

Next morning, at nine-thirty, I had one of the most unusual breakfasts I have ever faced in any of my wanderings. Three courses were served, in the following order:

Irish stew.

Fried sea-mullet.

Fried eggs.

Instead of coffee, tea or milk we again washed the solids down with flagons of iced red wine. I began to think that if I remained long enough on board I should need the services of an undertaker rather than of a cook. The next meal, the only other one of the day, was served at half-past four in the afternoon. When it came I was not hungry. My digestive juices were still wrestling with my breakfast.

On our way down the river we were a distributing agency. At one lonely spot we delivered two barrels of oil to a farmer for use in an engine he possessed; for domestic fuel he had an abundance of wood. A small hillock of drifted timber had been brought to him by the river and piled on the bank in front of his door. At Pilot Town, the home of the Gulf pilots who look after vessels between this town and the gulf and also of the River pilots who are responsible for them from the town to New Orleans, we dropped a rare number of bottles of beer. At the small settlement of Burwood, where live the engineers who keep the lower channels in order, we handed out our laundry basket.

Burwood is new, pleasantly planned, and occupied solely by officials, their staffs and families. It is a kind of oasis in a desert but has no natural supply of drinking water except that obtained from the roofs when rain falls. At the rear of every one of the cheerful, white-walled, green-roofed houses is a huge wooden cistern for the collection of rain water. Flowers abound. They never fail the long year through for, at the mouth of the Mississippi, there is never any frost.

I went ashore, visited the school, and at the request of the school mistress talked to the children. I spoke of England, not

of its politics nor its wars, but of its pleasant fields and cosy villages, its old grey castles and cathedrals, and the charms and wonders of London.

The children listened attentively and were, I hope, impressed.

Outside, however, the wheeling gulls screeched derisively and the pelicans, sitting on posts, looked down their noses and winked.

Burwood is the last inhabited place on the river and I could go no further, but I was near enough to the Gulf of Mexico to be able to say that I had seen the Mississippi from its cradle to its grave.

South of Pilot Town (Fig. 27) the distributaries of the Mississippi are called *passes*. They spread out

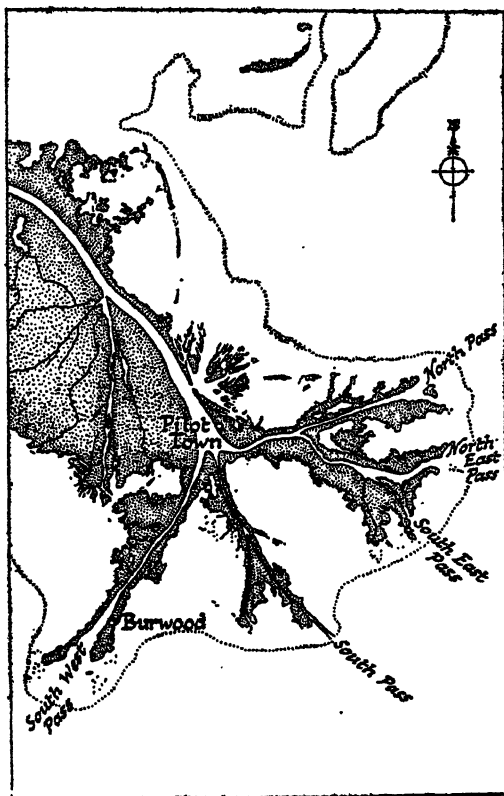


Fig. 27. The Mississippi Delta

like the bones of a duck's foot, each bounded by a narrow strip of swampy land. The place of the web is taken by a series of bays. As the swamp land is low, flat and very narrow you can look across it on either side to the waves of the gulf. I found it a curious experience to be on a kind of canal with two very thin, green, water-bound strips for banks, daringly pushing out into the ocean. In some places the banks had been pierced by floods, and short, shallow transverse channels connected the river and the sea.

On the semi-solid land grow tall reeds and long swamp grass, always bent before the wind, which provides some kind of pasture

for a few cattle. In amongst the reeds are snakes and musk rats; in the waters are turtles and alligators; both marsh and sky are full of birds — cranes, herons, pelicans, doves and ducks.

During the return journey we were a collecting agency. At night a light would flash amongst some trees and we would edge up to a frail wooden pier to see what we were wanted for. Our first stop in the darkness revealed a swinging lantern and a white dog: the negro swinging the lantern under the trees was almost invisible, as were those who presently appeared with loads of oranges until they came within the track of the beams from the lights of the boat.

‘What’s this place?’ I asked.

‘It isn’t a place’, said the captain. ‘Just one or two houses and a little orange business.’

Sometimes we were hailed by fishing boats from which we received sacks of oysters. At one halting place we were in touch with a road to New Orleans. Here several trucks were being loaded with shrimps. The decks of the shrimpers were piled several feet high with shrimps which men were shovelling vigorously into barrels much as if they had been feeding coal into a furnace. When filled, the tops of the barrels were covered with ice, the barrels were chucked on the trucks and the trucks whisked off to New Orleans in time for the early market.

Just before I went to bed I noticed bright flames leaping up in the distance and painting red wide areas of the star-lit sky. They were caused by the burning of natural gas at the mouth of oil wells. Because there was no use for the gas, and its consumption was necessary before the oil could be pumped, it had to be fired: one of the wells had been burning for fifteen months.

I went to the steersman’s cabin and made some remark about waste.

‘Waste?’ he said. ‘Why bother? In Louisiana we have plenty of everything — sulphur, oranges, oysters, oil and gas. There’s no state in the country like ours.’

## PART IV

### 'THE OLD SPANISH TRAIL'

#### CHAPTER XVII

#### OCEAN SPRINGS TO NEW ORLEANS

IN a tourist agency in New Orleans I picked up a folder called 'The Old Spanish Trail'. From it I gathered that in early times, when roads were few or non-existent, there was a trail, bearing the above name, which crossed the whole of the southern part of what is now the United States from St. Augustine (Florida) on the Atlantic coast to San Diego (California) on the Pacific coast, a distance of close on 3,000 miles.

Later on I learned that the folder was misleading. There never was any such old Spanish trail. No Spaniard ever made or could have made this trans-continental journey: the route would then have been impassable. There are Spanish cities at either end of it and along it, and parts of it were traversed by Spanish soldiers and missionaries, but the so-called Spanish Trail is a modern road 2,730 miles long, broad, well surfaced, constructed at enormous cost across swamps, deserts and mountains, and finished in 1929. I did not discover these facts till some months after I reached the Pacific coast and so travelled under the delusion that I was treading in the wake of the earliest of the southern pioneers.

Thus the title, 'The Old Spanish Trail', which I have affixed to the fourth section of this book is not altogether accurate. Moreover, I did not begin my journey along the trail at St. Augustine, Florida, but at Ocean Springs, Mississippi.

Ocean Springs was founded in 1699 by the brothers d'Iberville, two Frenchmen, not Spaniards, as a little colony where they might attempt to carry out Louis XIV's instructions 'to breed the buffalo; to seek for pearls; to examine the wild mulberry with a view to silk; the timber for ship building; and to seek for mines.'

The site of the colony was unfavourable. It was sandy, infertile, lacking in good water, plagued by heat and insects, and liable to attacks from Indians and from Spaniards who had settled to the east of it. To-day it is a popular seaside resort with nothing to

remind the visitor either of d'Iberville or of the early privateers who ruined his settlement. But in a garden I sat under a magnificent live oak, now known as the 'Ruskin Oak', because John Ruskin once took tea beneath its spreading branches.

Almost one with Ocean Springs is Biloxi, also founded by d'Iberville, in 1699, and by him named after a local Indian chief. Modern Biloxi, with its palatial hotels, hot-dog stands, bill-boards and tourists' auto-camps, shows nothing of either French or Spa-

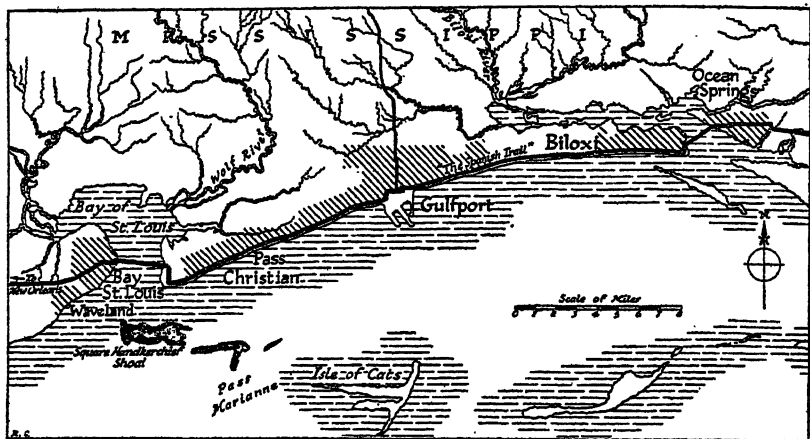


Fig. 28. The Mississippi Gulf Coast

nish influence except in the harbour where the fishing schooners call to mind the Mediterranean.

Owing to the amount of fish food brought to this coast by the waters of the Mississippi there is fishing of some kind or another all the year round. Of the commercial fish one of the most popular is mullet, often referred to as 'Biloxi bacon'. A local saying insists that anyone who eats mullet at Biloxi will always return. There is also a local story which relates how a small boy, after the capture of the port by northern forces during the Civil War, overhearing a Federal officer remark that the quickest way to bring the war to an end would be to starve the Southerners into submission, confounded him by replying there would be no starvation in the South as long as Biloxi's waters were so full of mullet.

The port, however, advertises itself as 'the nation's shrimp and

oyster canner'; it packs, each year, eight million cans with shrimps and eleven millions with oysters.

Shrimping was at one time done with nets and sailing boats. The schooners, their white sails taut in the wind, skimmed over the water as gracefully as gulls the while a man in the bows cast and recast his try net. As soon as he reported shrimps in abundance, down went the sails and anchor, and skiffs were launched to lay a quarter mile circle of net round the school. To the jeering of rival crews and the screaming of the gulls the net was hauled and the catch piled up on deck. In our time trawls have replaced the hand net, and the schooner is equipped with an engine instead of sails. The area that can be fished has widened and the men may be at sea from ten to thirty days. From bright sunrise to shadowed sunset men stand at the wheel and drag the trawls; at intervals of from three to four hours they pour out on the deck their mixed catch of shrimps, crabs and other forms of marine life. Freighters, loaded with ice, come out from time to time to receive the shrimps and carry them to the canneries.

From one of those interested in the shrimp industry I obtained a recipe for shrimp sauce. I pass it on to my lady readers.

Fry one cup of chopped salt pork in half a cup of cooking oil. Add three onions, chopped fine, and fry but do not allow to burn. Add one can of tomato juice, then three cups of boiling water and never let the water stop boiling. Add one teaspoon of Chili powder, two minced cloves of garlic, two bay leaves, one sprig of thyme and one teaspoon of celery salt. Cook slowly for about thirty minutes, stirring frequently.

'Sounds like a good sauce to me', I remarked, 'but what if I have no shrimps?'

'That ain't o' no account. Eat just anythin' you got.'

The typical oyster lugger has both sail and engine and draws a trawl made of steel and cordage, but some oystermen go out in skiffs and lift their prey with a long-handled tool which suggests two garden rakes tied teeth together.

Boat building is naturally associated with fishing. The Biloxi fisherman is adroit with mallet, plane and chisel; between the oyster and the shrimp seasons he fashions, in his back yard, sturdy craft which may take two years to build.



The shrimp and oyster fishers of Biloxi belong to several small communities such as are common all along this section of the coast of the Gulf of Mexico. Each community tends to be almost exclusively of one nationality and tends to preserve its own customs, language and outlook on life. In this case, however, its members are either descendants of Slavs, Austrians, Czechs or French. The French include descendants of both early settlers and also of those Acadians who were exiled from Nova Scotia. In addition there are some negroes but, of the sixteen largest cities in the state of Mississippi, Biloxi has the smallest negro population.

Further east, in small plots in the forest, there are communities composed of descendants of Swiss and German colonists who are engaged in lumbering; nearer at hand are others of French descent, speaking a French patois, raising poultry and growing pecan nuts and fruit.

The highway west from Biloxi clings, for about twenty-five miles, to the water front, winds under arches perpetually green, and draped with Spanish moss, between whose sturdy pillars are constant glimpses of a sparkling sea. Trees grow right down to the edge of the beach. The gnarled, aged water oaks and the magnolias are indigenous but the chinaberry, azalea, oleander and eucalyptus have been introduced from other warm parts of the world. The newcomers thrive luxuriantly in this latitude, are now completely naturalised, and lend an extra charm to this semi-tropical country.

The road is protected from the occasional fury of ocean storms by a concrete wall which is not, like so many of its relatives, an ugly scar. Instead of a dingy monotonous slope it is moulded in continuous steps along the curves of the beach and, for forty miles, shines dazzling white in the sunshine. It would be of interest purely as a great engineering achievement but its step-like form gives it the appearance of a great amphitheatre in whose enclosing arms the drama of the ocean may be viewed with delight.

In the course of my journey some fellow passenger, realising I was an appreciative alien, would point out things I ought to see and tell me stories I ought to hear. Through such kindly souls

I learned that a nice, clean, white, quite ordinary lighthouse was once painted black as a tribute to Abraham Lincoln when he was assassinated, and that a house called Beauvoir had once been the home of Jefferson Davis, the one and only President of the Confederate States. The house is now a shrine for the many who still pay tribute to the 'lost cause', a historic museum of heirlooms and antiquities which belonged to the Davis family.

Just beyond is Gulfport, modern and enterprising, once the world's leading exporter of the long leaf pine which, a generation ago, covered the south of the state of Mississippi. Gulfport still exports creosoted lumber but I fancy its present wealth is in its canned shrimps and oysters. At Gulfport the longshoremen comprise a small number of Greeks, a larger body of thrifty, progressive, hard-working Italians, and many negroes. The negroes are so advanced, politically, that they are organised in a powerful trade union and work under contract at standard wages. This, in the south, is a miraculous achievement.

My first longish halt was made at Pass Christian (pronounced Kristy Ann). The town enjoys the distinction of being the only one in the world with this name, a fact explained by its history. When d'Iberville was at Biloxi he sent two of his followers, Christian and Marianne l'Adnier, to find a channel or pass from the Gulf of Mexico to Lake Pontchartrain, an arm of the sea which approaches a bend in the Mississippi near the present site of New Orleans (Fig. 29).

They travelled west till they encountered the Square Handkerchief Shoals, when Christian turned shoreward and discovered the inside pass while Marianne turned towards the sea and discovered the outside pass. On their return the information they brought back was marked on the charts, and the newly found sea-lanes were given the first names of their discoverers. Descendants of the two brothers are still numerous in the neighbourhood of Pass Christian but their names have been Americanised to Ladnier or Ladner.

During my first meal at the hotel I passed several dishes. Later on a lady interviewed me to find out why. She said she was the hotel dietician and it was her duty to see that no guest died either of starvation or the consumption of unsuitable food. I explained

to her the limitations placed upon me by sundry eminent specialists, whereupon she said 'Well you just tell me exactly what your prescribed diet is and I'll see you get it. We often attend to as many as thirty diets at a time, and wives allow their husbands to come here alone because they know we won't let their menfolk eat anything that's going to disagree with them.'

I gave her my foods and their amounts, and the next day she concocted out of them such varied and delicious meals that I lingered at Pass Christian for ten days. I should probably have remained at Pass Christian just as long, in any case, for it is an unspoiled beauty spot without tourist camps, cabins, hot dog stands, swings or playgrounds and, except in a short stretch of small shops at the far end of the village, without any neon lights.

As far as Waveland on the west the chief element of the population is descended from rich families from New Orleans who made homes here a century and a half ago, long before there were any roads or railways, and the only means of communication were boats. The pride of the modern owners of the fine residences and picturesque gardens has caused them to resist all so-called 'developments', and to preserve from the blighting influence of the entertainment caterer a seashore which Nature has clothed with great beauty.

The little settlement nestles in loving contentment amid moss-bearded oaks which were old before d'Iberville first turned his prows into these waters. All that man has done in the after years has been to build beautiful homes, make the situation accessible by land, and provide a few quiet, comfortable hotels for discriminating visitors.

A purely literal description of the lay-out of the cities from Biloxi to Pass Christian does not sound very attractive. The plan is that of a series of parallel lines — the shore, the concrete wall with a walk on the top of it, a stretch of lawn, a hard paved road, a pavement and a line or lines of houses. But, as already remarked, the concrete wall is no monstrosity and, as for the sea, calm and silvery under a rising moon, or with its valleys shining with sunlit foam, the hollow throb of its surf and the saltiness of its breeze have long stimulated the imagination and compelled the admiration of civilised men.

What, however, gives the Scenic Sea Road, as it is called, its chief appeal is the houses, the bright flower gardens and the trees — especially the trees, the huge live oaks whose dark, knotty, far-flung arms carry streams of smoky grey Spanish moss, and the magnificent magnolias amongst which certain deciduous trees fling sudden splashes of red and gold. Though it was now near the end of December the yuccas were in bloom, their bells swaying in the wind as if they wished to tinkle, the convolvulus was trailing its purple length upon the coloured sand, while dahlias with pastel shades, and masses of chrysanthemums of many hues added their multiple brightnesses to those of the blue of the sky, the blue of the sea and the white tips of the feathered foam that curled along the beach.

The white houses, mostly of wood and with coloured roofs, sometimes small and simple, sometimes large and stately, are all set in parks and gardens and their verandahs are shaded with tropical plants. Some of them are of a type known as camel-backed. They have one story in front and two behind so that the structure rises like the back of a camel. This form of construction was the result of a tax which was laid on houses and varied according to the number of stories facing the street.

The waters covering the clean, smooth, hard, sandy beach are so shallow that it is necessary to go far out to find depth enough for swimming or for the launching of a boat. Hence, in front of almost every one of the larger houses there is a long, wooden pier with plank-walk and hand-rails terminated by a shelter fitted with seats. The piers are supported by slender piles which time and salt water have blackened and rendered crooked. The total effect of all the varieties of construction and stability is as quaint as it is unusual. In a misty light the piers take on the appearance of 'bony skeletons reaching out greedily as if the land were jealous of the sea and wanted to get its fingers on everything it could possibly grasp.'

I devoted many of my waking hours at Pass Christian to loafing on a long chair under the spreading oaks, sometimes reading but oftener just blinking, through the greenish light that was sifted and filtered by the trees on the boulevard, at the curving shore line, the lapping waters of the Mississippi Sound or the distant

outline of the Isle of Cats. I might have used them in other fashions, especially if I had been one of those people with a mania for killing things.

As it was winter time I could have begun with river fishing: had it been summer I could have gone fishing in the gulf. Along the west end of Cat's Island, down the passes at Pelican, Square Handkerchief and Telegraph reefs, during the summer and the early months of autumn, swarm tremendous schools of speckled sea trout, red fish, sea bass, mackerel, ling, cavalla or jack fish, and tarpon all following close ashore the schools of shrimp and small fish spawned in the lagoons of the Louisiana marshes. You may cast for trout, troll for fast-hitting mackerel, harpoon the giant ray, land large tropic fish with a spoon, or spear flounders at night by the light of a kerosene torch.

If you want easier amusement in the water you go crabbing. You put a chunk of smelly meat in a crab-net made of twine attached to a round hoop, fasten a line to the hoop, throw it as far out as you can and let it settle down on the sand. Then you wait a bit: you need not keep quiet because fish have no ears, but you had better keep still because they feel vibrations. In a few minutes the crabs, from all directions, come scuttling along, attracted by the foul odour of the bait. One by one they sidle into the net and fasten their long claws in the luscious morsel; after which you haul in the net and think of cooking.

I might have gone shooting. The land or semi-land of swamps and tidal marshes which lies along the Gulf coast is the natural home of water fowl. Within easy reach of Pass Christian there are four million acres of marsh, the world's greatest winter feeding ground of geese and ducks. North of Pass Christian are thousands of acres of cut-over lands where quail abound, while along the Wolf River bottoms you may bag squirrels, wild turkey and deer.

Fortunately the law prevents the shooting of the many species of birds which rest in this area on their migrations from the winter cold of the north. Some of these birds do not remain for more than a day or so, but while they rest they fill the gardens with song and colour.

When I felt energetic enough I walked, perhaps down to the

harbour, a semi-enclosed space half choked with sand, to watch men opening oysters and landing shrimps, and the blue-green crabs waving their searching claws. The harbour had all those lovely smells associated with fishing boats, of tarred ropes, drying nets, rotting wood, dead fish and other refuse which the uninitiated landsman mistakes for ozone.

Then there were inland walks to look at the coastal forests and meadows. These stretch back, in some areas, for a distance of fifteen miles, are ribbed by sluggish bayous and inhabited by another of those isolated communities to which I have referred. Back of Pass Christian the occupiers are descendants of French lumbermen, but they now make their living as small farmers, fishermen, and hunters of squirrels and rabbits. The roads are good, surfaced not with asphalt or concrete but with broken oyster shells. Even the main coastal highway was so paved until quite recent times.

One day I crossed the railway line, here flanked by a jungle of long-needed pines flourishing in the sandy soil, of palms, ferns and spiky plants. The farther I went the smaller became the houses. The mansions of the rich disappeared entirely. Their place was taken by meaner dwellings, gone grey in colour as is the custom of unpainted pine, and roofed with hand-split shingles of cypress. They seemed to have three or four small rooms and they opened, both back and front, on narrow verandahs. Their heavy wooden shutters and outward opening doors had, unlike the walls, once been painted and the favourite colour had been blue.

The occupants looked poorly nourished and were certainly poorly clad. I afterwards learned that their chief food is an unleavened pancake of flour and water baked on the top of an oven or fried in a pan. Though lacking in the world's goods these humble toilers are noted for their kindness to each other. They will share anything they possess with their neighbours, even their 'best clothes', when a wedding or a funeral demands something better than a collection of rags and patches.

A bright half-moon hung in the sun-lit blue, the graceful pale grey bare branches of the pecan trees looked even more silvery than usual against the deep green leaves and the golden lamps

of the orange trees, and the sun was radiant. Presently I saw five lumpish objects in a clearing. They were so still I was not sure whether they were sheep or rocks: I had to fling a few oyster shells in order to find out. Sheep are very rare in this part of the world: rocks or stones absolutely absent. Another guest in my hotel told me that when he was a boy and wanted something with which to load his catapult for the killing of birds he would walk as many as ten miles to fill his pockets with small pebbles which some road-mender was using in making his surface dressing.

Talking of sheep reminds me that I could never understand why, in hotels and restaurants all over the United States, mutton was scarce but lamb chops always plentiful, or why legs of lamb, when obtainable, were often completely flavourless while chops of lamb were nearly always toothsome.

I came at last to a sluggish bayou, a sparkling blue strip of water lying between fields of brown marsh grass on one side and a green background of pines on the other. Here I turned for home, down another lane of oyster shells by the side of a forest of a second growth. In some places the second growth had again been cut, and poor farm houses were rising amongst the ploughed fields which lay in black patches by the side of the white-shelled road.

The stems of many of the younger trees carried advertisements concerning 'Sweet Feet for Athletes'. America is full of outspoken advertisements of remedies for unpleasant bodily disturbances.

To the stems of many of the older trees cups were attached for the collection of resin. Early in the spring an inspector decides which trees are to be cupped. The sap which collects is transferred from the cups to large barrels; the barrels are loaded on trucks and taken to a still. Here negro workers pour the resin into a big kettle fitted in a brick furnace and, by processes I need not describe in detail, fill other barrels with the distilled product. This hardens into transparent amber, gum-turpentine.

When a tree gives no more sap it is felled and cut into logs. The stump, eighteen to twenty inches high, is blown up and shredded, and the last remnants of resin, pine-oil and turpentine are extracted. In these days when 'conservation of natural resour-



Tow Boat *St. Louis*

*Photo: Ernest Young*



Erosion of banks on the Mississippi

*Photo: Ernest Young*





*Photo: Ernest Young*

"Hurdles" on the Mississippi  
Part of our tow on left



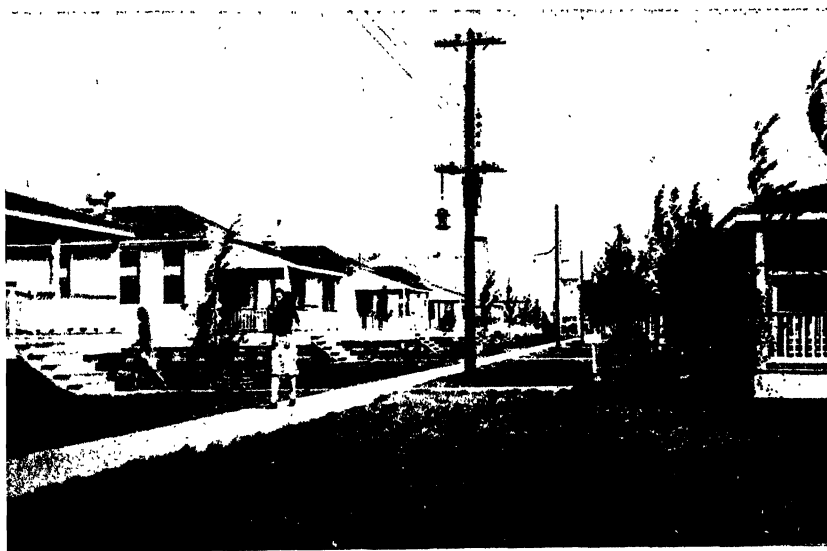
*Photo: Ernest Young*

Banks revetted with concrete slabs to prevent erosion



*Photo: Ernest Young*

In the Mississippi Delta  
Farmer's landing stage and stranded timber



*Photo: Ernest Young*

Burwood



*Photo: Ernest Young*

Live oaks and Spanish moss



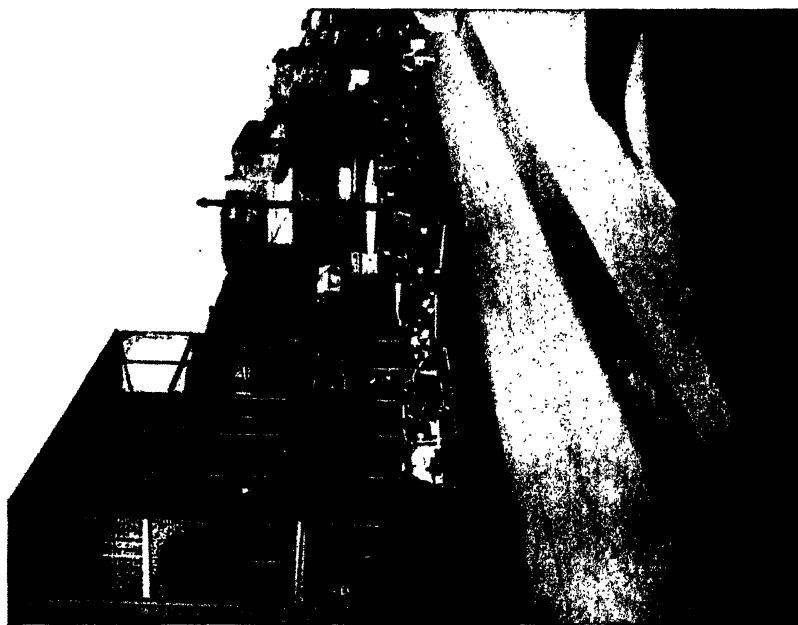
*Photo: Ernest Young*

Sea wall and piers, Pass Christian



*Photo: Ernest Young*

**Patio, New Orleans**



*Photo: Ernest Young*

**Balconies in Royal Street, New Orleans**



*Photo: Ernest Young*

Odd Fellows' cemetery, New Orleans



*Photo: Ernest Young*

On the Levee, New Orleans



Bayou Teche, Louisiana

*Photo: Ernest Young*



*Photo: Ernest Young*

Statue of Evangeline, St. Martinville, Louisiana



*Photo: Ernest Young*

Breeding platforms for egrets, Jungle Gardens, Avery Island, Louisiana

ces' is a national slogan, there is less indiscriminate felling in the forest than there was and less waste in the treatment of what is felled.

As an old schoolmaster I was amused to read in a guide-book to the Mississippi Gulf Coast that the first teachers in this district were paid in produce — 'a sack of potatoes, a sheep, a quarter of beef, so many jugs of syrup, or squares of sugar boiled down from cane juice.' At the end of each school term the teacher hired out to a farmer, or farmed his own land if he had any, and his skill with an axe or a plough was held more to his credit than his ability to teach the alphabet or the multiplication table.

West of Pass Christian the road leaves the shallow shores of the Gulf and, by a bridge two miles long, crosses a big inlet of the sea called the Bay of St. Louis. On December 13, 1814 this bay witnessed a conflict between American gun boats and British launches in which twelve hundred seamen and marines took part and the British were beaten. According to my driver, who told me the story, the American defenders were rather slow in getting into action. An invalid old lady, distressed by the delay, went out to the land force and exclaiming 'My Lord! Colonel! Fire at least one gun for the honour of the country' herself set off one cannon with a lighted cigarette.

In entered the town of Bay St. Louis, ran on through the pine country of the Ozone Belt, crossed the Pearl River which forms the boundary between the states of Mississippi and Louisiana, traversed a forest of live oaks and tall pines, crossed the Rigolets by one of the finest bridges on the road, came to Fort Pike which once guarded the entrance to Lake Pontchartrain, went through an area inhabited largely by trappers who, in the summer, dry thousands of musk rat skins in the sun, was greeted by scores of small negro boys offering crabs and crayfish for sale and arrived, for the third time on this journey, in New Orleans.



## CHAPTER XVIII

### NEW ORLEANS

A well known American author has said that there are only four 'story cities' in the United States. One of these is New Orleans. Its interests are literary, historical and geographical. Being geographically inclined I deal first with the nature of the site: it helps in the understanding of the history.

In order that full advantage should be taken of the thousands of miles of waterways provided by the Mississippi and its tributaries it is obvious that some point of contact had to be established between the river and the sea. This could not be at any point on the wave-lapped edge of the delta where the ground is little better than unconsolidated mud, and in the old days of the sailing ships any journey up the river was so difficult and dangerous that the lower reaches were but little used.

At one point, however, the Mississippi makes a great curve which brings it near to one arm of the sea called Lake Pontchartrain (Fig. 29). The lake is really a large bay which has escaped being filled in by silt from the north. Viewed from the road which runs along its southern shore it looks like the sea itself, as well it may, for it covers six hundred square miles. It is also salt, has seaweed and sea shells, gulls and tides.

At the point referred to above it was possible, by a short portage, to make contact between boats on the river and ships on the ocean and it was this fact that led Bienville to choose it as the site of the settlement he established in 1718 and called New Orleans. The Indians already had a portage across the narrow strip of land between the Mississippi and Lake Pontchartrain and dragged their canoes overland to and from the Bayou St. John and the river. The line of that portage is marked to-day by the Carondelet canal which runs, straight as an arrow, from Bayou St. John to Jackson Square, the centre of old New Orleans.

The site was not an ideal one for a great city. The ground was

low, most of it below high river level. It was covered with marshes and canebrakes; alligators dived and splashed, barked and hissed in the meandering waters; huge frogs croaked their melancholy serenades, and mosquitoes added perpetual torment.

Yet Bienville, with his hard-bitten soldiers, artisans, diggers

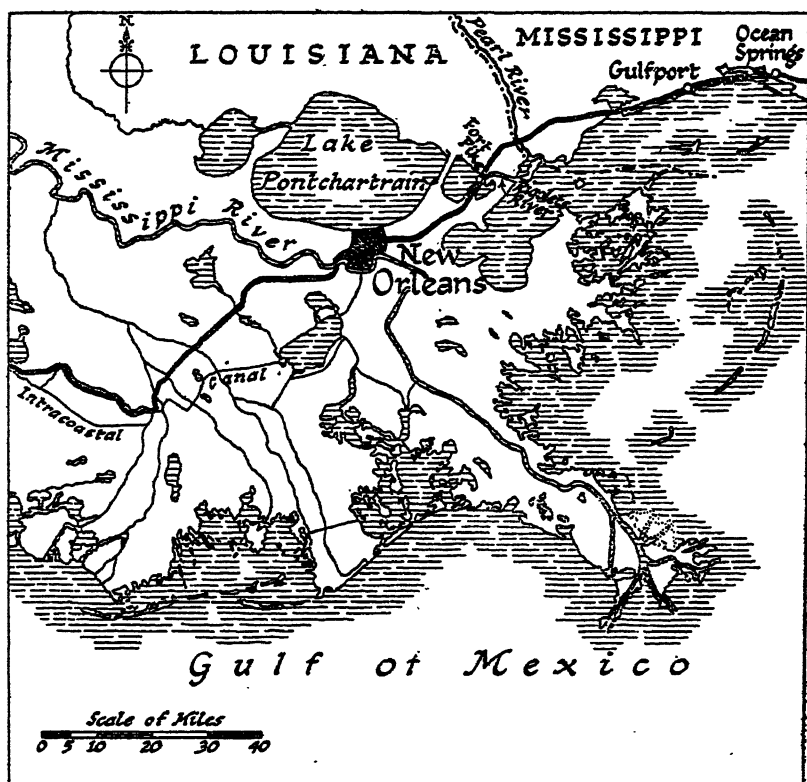


Fig. 29. The Site of New Orleans

and surveyors, some of them straight from France, others from Canada, was not dismayed. Within eight months they built, in a clearing in the swamps, a number of dwellings, three large palm-thatched wooden buildings, and a church of mud, logs and palm leaves which occupied the site of the present cathedral. At the end of that time they celebrated, on Christmas Eve, the first Mass.

The celebration must have been a picturesque event. In the roughly built church were a little portable altar, images of Christ in the manger, of donkeys leaning over the new-born Child to warm him with their breath, and of the Virgin and St. Joseph. Through the darkness, guided by the light of flaring torches, there came across the swamps Canadians in caps of beaver skin with the fur outside and the tail hanging down like a pig-tail, others in caps of musk rat skins, all in rough cloth or rougher leather; Indians in fringed buckskin, decorated with beads and porcupine quills; soldiers, armed with flint-lock muskets, swords and pikes, in high jack boots, leather jerkins, steel breastplates and morions; a few of the better quality in knee-breeches, stockings, buckled shoes, coats with long skirts and long lapels, and with high stocks muffling their throats. In the candle-lit church the congregation, kneeling reverently at the elevation of the Host, was filled with the spirit of worship.

Shortly after the celebration of this Mass the settlers put up two barn-like structures of hewn wood and palm thatch, which they called 'Government Warehouses', to hold their supplies of food and ammunition. One of these was on the site of the present Cabildo, the other on the site of the present Presbytery.

All this took place in 1718. About the same time the old city, now called the Vieux Carré, was laid out. It included the parallelogram extending from Canal Street to Esplanade Avenue and from Rampart Street to the river. In the middle of the side facing the river a portion of land, the Place d'Armes, was set aside to serve as a parade ground. The streets bore French names and a French impress. The city was surrounded by defensive walls. Beyond the walls were the swamps, and the bayou which is now Canal St.

Towards the end of the Seven Years War France transferred Louisiana, which then included all the region between the Mississippi and the Rocky mountains, to Spain in order to prevent its falling into the hands of the British, and for forty years New Orleans, whose inhabitants were mainly of French extraction, was governed by Spanish officials. This change, in time, brought about the mixture of French and Spanish blood called Creole. The term 'Creole' is proudly used, by those inhabitants entitled

to it, to indicate their descent from the best families of France and Spain and the purity of their blood, and to distinguish themselves from the later American immigrants whom, at first, they disliked and despised.

The term 'Creole negro' is sometimes, but wrongly and unwisely, used to denote both people of mixed blood and those French-speaking negroes born and bred in Louisiana. 'Creole' is so significant of excellence that it is employed in the markets as an indication of quality. If you buy Creole chickens, Creole eggs or Creole vegetables you should, and usually do, get articles of local produce which, as any Louisianan will tell you, are much better than similar articles from beyond the borders of their own state.

The transfer of the city from France to Spain had another effect which did not, however, become apparent until two great fires, one in 1788 and another six years later, nearly destroyed the whole of the buildings erected by the French. In the course of rebuilding the city acquired a Spanish impress: the Vieux Carré is a Spanish rather than a French survival.

The Vieux Carré is unlike anything else in America. Within its few blocks — it covers but a small area — are mingled memories of France, Spain, Africa and Colonial America: modern America lies beyond its boundaries. The streets are narrow and the houses are built flush to the side-walks so that those on one side of the street can benefit from the shade cast by those on the other. The original side walks, called *banquettes*, were a series of raised planks which served as footways in the days of slushy, water-soaked streets: the planks are gone but the name remains. The 'best families' lived above their places of business in tremendous rooms adorned with massive marble mantelpieces and crystal chandeliers.

Some of these houses still remain. At their latticed windows señoritas thrilled to the serenades of their lovers. Their arched entrances and ponderous wooden doors lead to sunny courtyards where dancing feet once trod fantastic rhythms. The most striking reminder of the Spanish period of rebuilding, and of the glamorous days of romance and chivalry, is the beautiful but often begrimed and rust-eaten wrought-iron or cast-iron grilles sur-

rounding the numerous balconies, especially in Royal Street and Charles Street. Nearly all the wrought iron was imported from Spain and, owing to its high carbon content, has suffered comparatively little from rust. The cast iron, on the other hand, rusts easily and is preserved, if preserved at all, by means of paint. The balconies are a response to the climatic condition of great summer heat but the grilles were a response to the pride of the householders who vied with each other in the exhibition of elaborate designs.

As you walk through the narrow streets and alleys, the narrowest in the city, and glance up at the profuse display of craftsmanship in iron, the centuries, if you are not too critical, will roll back and, at night, if you have enough imagination, you may recapture some of the gaiety, the romance, the feasting, the love making and the beauty which set apart, in America, the days known by old New Orleans. It is not at all difficult to people the streets with cavaliers, swashbucklers, pirates, and dashing revelers courting lovely dark-eyed maidens who sighed their responses behind the latticed windows.

In the daytime this self-delusion is not quite so easy: decay is too evident. The little courts and patios, the quaint roofs and balconies, the wrinkled faces of the old houses, even at their best, have a 'solemn look of gentility in rags' and, at their worst, 'a squalor almost oriental'. At the same time one can quite easily understand why novelists have so often written stories with the Vieux Carré as a background and why it ever attracts a multitude of painters, etchers and photographers.

The patio and the grille are Spanish. French influence is evidenced in other ways and has Napoleonic associations. One of the streets bears his name; others commemorate his victories. In Chartres Street is a house built by a wealthy New Orleans merchant who planned to rescue the exiled Emperor and bring him here to live. In Toulouse Street is the Court of Two Lions enclosed by a high brick wall with massive square gate posts supporting a wide double wooden gate. On the tops of the posts are marble lions looking at each other as if they were wondering what they were doing in this environment. The chief features of interest, however, are the Egyptian designs on the pilasters sup-

porting the roof. They are due to a fashion which prevailed in Europe and some other parts of the world after Napoleon's visit to Egypt, a visit that popularised Egyptian pyramids and ornaments as features of architectural design.

Amongst the smaller things which attracted my attention, and still make demands upon my memory, are a balcony from which Jenny Lind once sang to a crowded street, the house in which Adeline Patti lived while her voice was making history at the French Opera House, and 'Ye Olde Pipe Shoppe', which seems to have strayed here by accident.

There are few large buildings of any note. The three most important stand side by side on Jackson Square, originally known as the Parade or Place d'Armes. The largest of the three buildings is the cathedral of St. Louis, erected in 1794. It stands on the site of the first church built in New Orleans and has great interest for the modern citizens as the scene of many romantic incidents in their history. But it is not worthy of its heritage: its walls have cracked and sagged; its proportions are wrong and its interior decorations are deplorable.

On one side of it stands the Presbytery, on the other the Cabildo. The Cabildo is, architecturally, the most worthy of the three, probably the finest erected by the Spaniards in Louisiana. It was formerly used for administrative purposes but now houses the State Museum.

In 1803 France once more took formal possession of the city — for twenty days, after which the French flag was replaced by the Stars and Stripes. New Orleans, Creole in nature, became American in name but did not welcome Americans, and a new New Orleans, independent of the old one, except in matters of government, began to rise outside the walls.

The dividing line between the two cities is Canal Street (Fig. 30), a magnificent thoroughfare, one of the widest streets in the United States. From one side to the other it measures 171 feet. It includes two spacious roadways, wide side-walks and a central, wider, 'neutral' ground. Like a number of other unusually wide streets in New Orleans it owes its width to the fact that it occupies the space, now filled in, of a former giant open canal. Both the side walks and the neutral ground are paved in

modernistic style with pink and white terrazo marble which reflects the brilliant sunlight by day and the flood of electric light by night. The lamp posts are ornamented with plaques commemorating the French, Spanish, Confederate and American administrations. They are so close together and carry such powerful arc lamps that Canal Street is reputed to be one of the best lighted streets in the world: at night the electric lamps and the neon signs make it a river of light.

Close at hand the effect is a little garish but distance softens

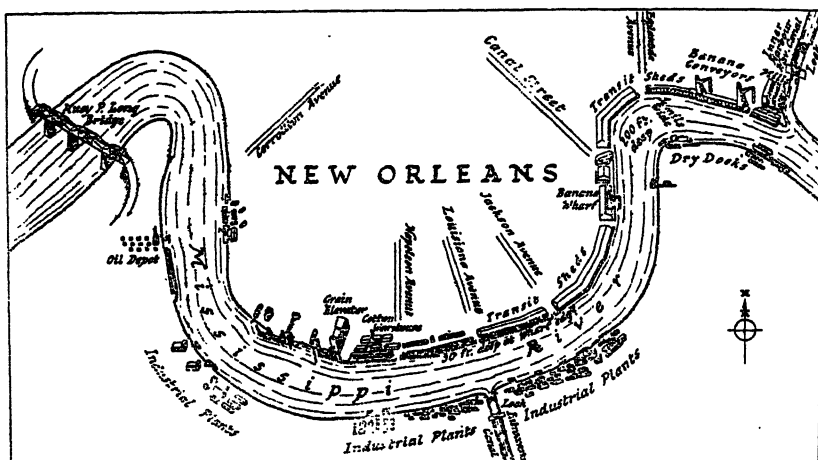


Fig. 30. The Port of New Orleans

it and makes it pleasing. Anyway, garish or not, I liked it. Man is a creature of many moods and, in some of mine, Canal Street, both by day and night, brought me a cheerful sense of gay colour and active movement.

Canal Street extends, a distance of three and a half miles, from the river to the newer cemeteries. These cemeteries — there are quite a number of them — are grouped together and cover so many acres that they form a veritable city of the dead: their streets and avenues are named and sign-posted as in a city of the living. In the older ones there is much neglect, all the sadder because it accompanies much vulgar ostentation: in the newer ones there is some form of permanent upkeep, less ostentation,

and the orderliness, neatness and colour of a well-kept public park.

As New Orleans is below the level of the river, the water in the ground was, in former times, so near the surface that houses could not have cellars, and graves filled with water as soon as they were dug. It was, therefore, necessary to bury the dead above the surface. The coffins were placed in stone or brick houses, in ovenshaped openings in long walls or in blocks containing such openings. I counted forty-eight spaces belonging to one family in one of these tunnelled blocks. In these days, despite the lack of natural drainage, New Orleans is one of the best drained cities in the world, and the water level is now so far below the surface that there is no longer any need to put the dead on shelves above the ground, but the custom continues: old fashions have outlasted modern improvements.

Under American government New Orleans, though still surrounded by river, lakes and swamps, has become a closely built city, with few so-called suburbs, covering two hundred square miles and containing half a million people. In the older section you can envisage life as it was in the colourful days of two centuries ago: in the new one are modern monuments to progress that challenge the admiration, even of those who do not think that mere size is admirable or that the triumphs of engineering have brought any advantages to humanity comparable to those we owe to the fine arts.

The old section sleeps: the modern throbs. There are over a thousand industrial plants producing more than a thousand different articles. The chief of these plants deal with sugar for domestic consumption, wood products from the abundant local supplies of timber, and fertilisers for use in the cotton fields. In order to encourage manufacturers to establish factories, the civic authorities have provided buildings with ideal transport facilities, banished the yellow fever mosquito by the destruction of tens of thousands of cisterns, and removed the fear of bubonic plague by the construction of rat-proof warehouses on the river front.

New Orleans, however, is not so much a manufacturing as a commercial city. It is the gateway to the Mississippi valley and to all the valleys of the other big rivers of the same basin, and



in the value of its foreign trade claims to be the second port of the United States. To handle this commerce every advantage has been taken of the possibilities offered by the river. The deep

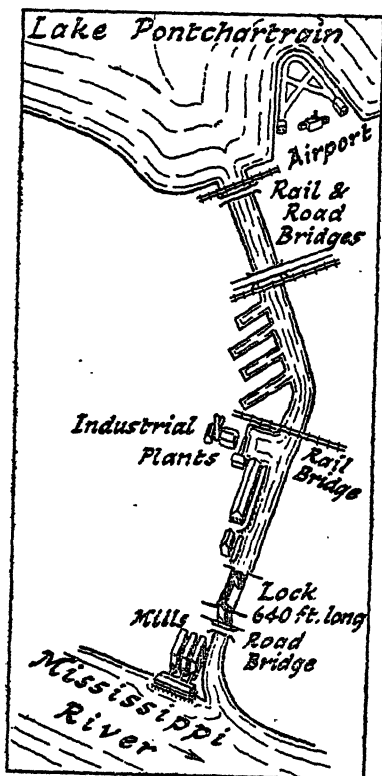


Fig. 31. New Orleans,  
Inner Harbour Navigation Canal

curve of the river, nine miles long, provides magnificent facilities (Fig. 30). Opposite the end of Canal Street it is 2,200 feet wide and has a depth, even at low water, so great that the wharves have no piers, ships lie practically at the doors of the warehouses and need no tugs. From the river to Lake Pontchartrain a canal, the Inner Harbour Navigation Canal (Fig. 31) runs right across the city and adds about another twelve miles to the water front. Altogether the harbour has a frontage of nearly fifty miles.

At the risk of conflict with monster trucks and hefty negro porters I watched the forging of the links of a great international commercial chain. By invitation I entered some of the immense steel and concrete transit sheds, particularly the cotton warehouses covering many acres, the

banana sheds where conveyors transfer from ship to railway thousands of bundles an hour and the coffee terminals which operate on the same kind of scale. I gaped, like any yokel, at elevators capable of holding millions of bushels of grain, at mountainous dumps of coal and battalions of oil tanks.

The contents of the warehouses are an index to the varied wealth of the United States. They include vast quantities of sugar, molasses, rice, tobacco, maize, pork, wheat, oats, flour, cotton, cotton-seed, hardware, cement, whisky and furs. For all

these things I was more or less prepared, but not for the furs.

I remembered reading that New Orleans had been founded as a fur-trading post, but that all seemed very remote and I was much surprised to learn, at the Chamber of Commerce, that New Orleans is to-day the centre of the greatest fur trading area in America. According to my informant Louisiana annually exports more pelts than any other state in the Union, or any one province of Canada. It has, in some years, produced more pelts than all the provinces and territories of the Dominion of Canada and Alaska put together. The fur-bearing animals of the state include the opossum, racoon, mink, weasel, skunk, little spotted skunk, wild cat, wolf, grey fox, beaver and musk rat.

In order that visitors may see all the things, both old and new, of which the city is proud, a Visitors Route, fifty miles long, has been mapped out and marked by enamelled signs bearing the fleur-de-lis of France — not the Stars and Stripes of America. Three golden fleurs-de-lis on a field of white were on the flag carried by Marquette and Joliette when, in 1672, they saw the Mississippi in the north, by La Salle who, in the name of the King of France, took possession of Louisiana in 1682, and by the French-Canadian brothers Pierre le Moyne d'Iberville and Jean Baptiste le Moyne d'Iberville when they settled in Louisiana in 1699. In Louisiana, as in Quebec, French traditions, in matters small as well as great, still persist, and the golden fleur-de-lis remains a part of the arms of the city.

I believe old New Orleans is prouder of its French ancestry than new New Orleans is of its American development. French is widely spoken in the streets, and in all the restaurants and cafés of the Vieux Carré. *The New Yorker*, I think, once had a story of a business woman who entertained some business men at a luncheon in a French restaurant in New York. When the meal was finished and she had to pay the bill, she whispered to the waiter 'L'addition, s'il vous plaît', to which the waiter replied 'Downstairs to your left, lady'. That story could not have been told of any French restaurant in the Vieux Carré. One day, with a beret on my head, I entered such a restaurant and was at once greeted in French. I had to explain that I was English and more familiar with that language. The waitress, thinking to pay me a

compliment, said 'You English? Why you speak English as well as an American.'

To see the Visitors Route takes four hours, not including stops, if you travel by car. I walked it, with many stops, and it took me about two weeks. I make no attempt to describe all that I saw. I must be content with a selection of both sights and impressions. From a utilitarian point of view I suppose the most important things are the levees which prevent the city from being flooded. In some places they are fifty feet wide at the summit and rise five feet higher than the highest known level of the river. They hold back the water, not only in the river, but in Lake Pontchartrain and the canals as well, so that they are as conspicuous as they are useful. In the days of the packet boats they were the scene of much picturesque activity and a common promenade. Along the harbour this has all been displaced by modern docks and steel transit sheds, but on the outskirts of the city you can still walk for several miles upon their broad summits.

The levees are built of earth. They are covered with grass and slope steeply on the side towards the river. The top is wide enough for wheeled traffic but vehicles are not permitted to make use of it. At one place, between the levee and the water, down on some swampy ground, I found a settlement of negroes and poor whites. It is not shown to visitors on sight-seeing tours but it is as full of pictures as of misery.

The houses are of wood, petrol-tins and rags, are raised above the damp ground on piles, and connected with the levee by ramshackle bridges of planks. At the levee end of each bridge is a pair of benches, facing each other, one on either side. At almost any hour of the day are the scene of conversation and laughter. Numerous scabby, scrubby dogs sunned themselves on the planks and little children begged me to take their pictures.

As I responded to their request a negress, holding a child by the hand, asked for alms.

'What's the name of the child?' I asked.

'Cerissa.'

'Are you hungry, Cerissa?'

She did not speak, but her eyes and her shrunken body told a sorry tale, and I gave the mother a small coin, small but evidently

larger than she expected, for with a kind of pained delight she muttered, 'May God bless and preserve you.' I never earned such a heartfelt benison at so small a cost.

From an artistic point of view the most conspicuous feature is the fifty miles of floral trails. Many other cities in the United States are brightened by flowers and planted boulevards but no other offers so many miles of continuous floral decoration, ever brilliant against a background of stately old oaks, palatial houses, sparkling water and beautiful parks. Nearly fifty thousand azaleas, dazzling in their array of varied colours, vie with thousands of camelias, delicately tinted *crêpe myrtle* and *spiraea* to create a spectacle of rare and unforgettable beauty. Private citizens have followed suit, and in their unfenced gardens have planted so many brilliantly coloured flowers that New Orleans is a tinted fairy land. There are flowers in New Orleans when many other parts of the country may be either burned brown by the sun or whitened by the winter snows.

The parks are of great size and very attractive. They are specially distinguished by their giant, moss-bearing, live oaks, so old and freighted with the cares of centuries, that many of their branches trail long distances on the ground. They are so big that they may cast a shade a hundred feet in diameter, and the branches, if they are not to trail on the ground, may have to be held up by cables. The grey beard Spanish moss which floats from the branches forms the basis of an important local industry: it is picked, dried in the sun and used for stuffing upholstery.

The well-to-do inhabitants of New Orleans tend to live in individual houses, often big and roomy, with numerous spacious verandahs, porches and galleries. They have not, as yet, begun to pile themselves on one another in tiers in big buildings where the divine idea of home is buried. Naturally the houses vary in size and style and in the material with which they are constructed; the streets in which they stand vary in width and beauty.

Many of the houses are still of wood: the favourite timber used for this purpose is cypress, which is abundant in the neighbourhood and is not affected by damp. Some of these wooden houses are as charming and dignified as any in stone and brick, but there are others which are a comic mixture of fretwork and classic

styles: the architects have mixed up two books of designs with unhappy results. In the negro quarters the houses are almost invariably of wood and one story high. Once upon a time they were bright with new paint, had windows filled with glass instead of rags and paper, and walls not yet conspicuous for holes patched with rusty tin.

Amongst evidences of culture and comfort are a score or more of good bookshops, not mere magazine stalls or joint repositories of cheap novels and hair curlers; newstands that display foreign papers such as *The Times Weekly Edition*; an official guide book compiled by scholars and historians, not hacks; hotels that are warm without being ovens; French salad dressing without sugar or pink colouring matter; the offer of wine as an alternative to milk or water.

The last two remarks bring me to the vastly important subject of food and wine. New Orleans has a number of delightful old restaurants with the cuisine and atmosphere of the best of their class in France. Such are Antoine, Arnaud, Kolb, Gallatoire, and La Louisiana. Each has its speciality, some of them known to gourmets wherever these wise folk congregate.

New Orleans had Paris-trained chefs when the rest of America, in the absence of a frying pan, would have eaten its food raw or else have starved. In this city, as in France, cooking is an art, and dining is a ritual not a monotonous habit, a restoration of soul and body and not an unseemly guzzling race.

This attitude towards the things and manners of the table began with the French but, in a city with as varied a history as New Orleans, the actual skill of the best chefs owes something to Spain, Italy and Germany. Creole dishes are a rich result of many influences. The great exponents of the tradition, the guardians of all that is distinctive and famous in this connection, are found in the best restaurants but not in all the restaurants. You can get stomach ache and nausea as easily in New Orleans as anywhere else. Few, however, are the cities where, at the proper price, you can as easily enter Paradise, hand in hand with the chef.

All the restaurants specialise in 'sea-food' for the excellence of which the Gulf of Mexico is primarily responsible. The oysters baked in their shells; the crayfish boiled in white wine

and subsequently pounded into a pulp with the addition of cream, aromatic herbs and vegetables; the succulent fish, pompano, cooked in a paper bag with a sauce of crab meat; the shrimp remoulade; the crab meat on toast garnished with Parmesan cheese and anchovies; the trout cooked with almonds in butter-sauce; all these and many other dishes have given memories to my palate which will make my mouth water for the rest of my days. The meats are less delectable, owing to their lack of natural flavour, but I cannot forget the lamb chops served with a sauce of chicken livers, mushrooms and sweetbreads. And I can almost weep when I think that perhaps never again shall I finish my dinner with the crowning glory of a cup of black coffee burned with cognac and flavoured with spices.

My only criticism of the restaurants of New Orleans is that many of them do not offer the wines which should be drunk with their specialities. In some of them no domestic dry white wine is to be had though California makes some excellent ones. If the dry white wines of France or Germany are stocked they are so expensive that only the very rich can afford to drink them. Until this defect is remedied the claim of the New Orleans restaurants that they are as good as the best in Paris or London cannot be admitted because, as the knowing Frenchman says, 'A good dinner deserves a good wine; a bad dinner needs it.'

My favourite restaurant was Antoine's, where I dined every Sunday in order that I might fittingly mark the beginning of another week. Antoine's is no gorgeous saloon plastered with gold leaf and daubed with gaudy colours where liveried footmen, grooms and attendants extract begrudged gratuities from the diner, and jazz bands deafen his sensitive ears and drown all attempts at sensible conversation, but simply a clean place with home-like table-ware and linen, efficient multi-lingual waiters and perfect food and wine. You may go in with the bluest of blues but the world will be full of roses and sunshine when you leave.

At the mid week, just to keep my palate in training, I went to La Louisiana. It occupies one of those old mansions with filigree balconies, green shutters and white facade which belong to the early years of the nineteenth century. Like the rest of the famous

restaurants it keeps and values a visitors' book. I have lost the names of many of those with whose shades I ate and drank in other places, but I remember that at La Louisiana I kept company with General Bertrand who took Napoleon's body back to France, of Thackeray who went away to write a poem about bouillabaisse, of Sara Bernhardt, Suzanne Lenglen, Melba, Kreisler, Maeterlinck and Coué. I know now where Coué originated his slogan 'Every day, in every way, I feel better and better.'

I have taken off my hat to the restaurants. Now let me salute the police. One morning I discovered that my two cameras had disappeared from my bedroom: I felt as mournful as a dawn drizzle. I called the maid but she knew nothing. The maid called the housekeeper who also knew nothing. The housekeeper called the manager who called the police. At seven in the evening I was interviewed by a detective who asked all the necessary questions. The next evening, at six o'clock, I was asked to go to the manager's office. There I found the police, the thief, my two cameras and an overcoat I had not missed. In a few hours the police had discovered my property in a suit case at a bus depot and arrested the thief repeating his exploits in another hotel.

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## CHAPTER XIX

### THE EVANGELINE COUNTRY

#### *New Orleans to New Iberia*

MY western route in the South, which had so far led me through the cotton, lumber, turpentine and pecan nuts of Mississippi to New Orleans, was now to take me through nearly three hundred miles of the cotton, rice, sugar and oil lands of the mainly sleepy, dreamy state of Louisiana.

The early December morning was damp and foggy, something like a November morning in London, but it did nothing to depress the most voluble person I have ever met — an Irish priest. He sat in the middle of the bus and in a loud, harsh voice cracked jokes and held conversation with the driver. From time to time he strolled from one end of the bus to the other, patting the heads of the children and, at the top of his voice, blessing them or telling them funny stories. I was amused but the driver was bothered and my fellow passengers were annoyed.

Along we went through rich, fertile, river-bottom land devoted to some of the most prosperous market gardens (or truck gardens as the Americans call them) in the South. The usual scenery of any American road — huge advertisement boards, filling stations, tourist cabins and small eating places — were at first as predominant as ever, but soon there were also cattle deep in long grass, live oaks with silvery-green dripping moss, feathery cypresses clustered in swamps, thick-leaved water-hyacinths floating on the streams, mules on the road and negro shacks by the side of it. The landscape was one of low tones — brown grass, grey moss, and autumn tints which had lost their gaiety in the fog. When the fog lifted the sun shone down upon a lonesome, awesome land of melancholy swamp.

We came to a village called Des Allemands founded in 1914 by German farmers from Alsace-Lorraine but bearing no traces



of German origin except personal names as seen above the shops. Such settlements are common all over the United States. They would appear to demonstrate that the country lays her hands firmly on all who come to her, breaks their home ties and prints

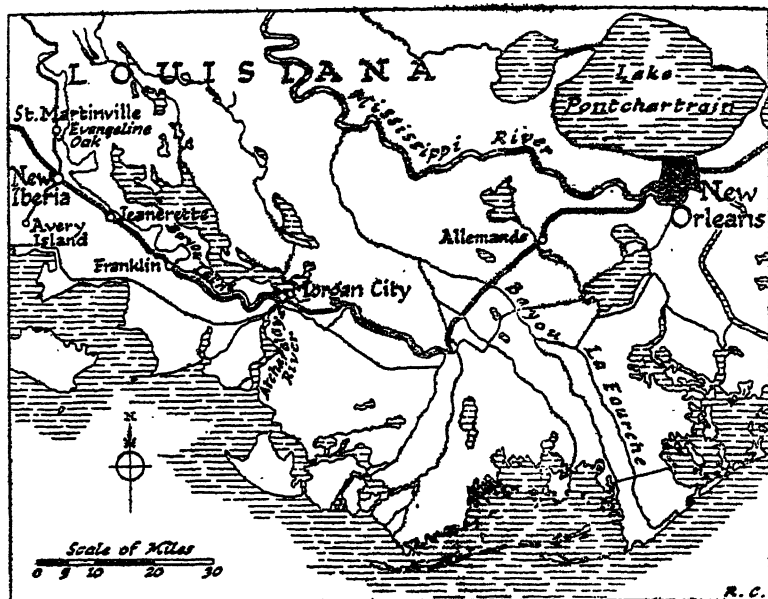


Fig. 32. New Orleans to New Iberia

upon them her own trademark. But the matter is not quite so simple as all that.

There are wide areas settled by people most of whom have migrated from one country — Finland, Sweden, Germany and so on. In such cases though national things are of American pattern, the ties of the homeland are long retained. The migrant teaches his children the language of his ancestors, keeps up many of his native customs, observes his national festivals and maintains his national mentality. And even in material things the change is not always rapid: I know of a Danish settlement in California where the church and the school are both Danish in design.

The process of Americanisation is, of course, more rapid where

there is intermixture and not segregation of the different nationalities, but it takes time. Some idea of it may be obtained from the following quotation from an article in *The Saturday Evening Post*. The writer, speaking of an elderly immigrant from Croatia, says she is essentially 'old fashioned in her ways and purposes and in her sense of values. Her English is still uncertain. All her sons talk fluent Croatian and when she is alone with them she speaks only her native language. Most of her daughters-in-law, however, and nearly all her grand-children and great-grand-children know no Croatian and their ways are not Croatian nor immigrant, but something called 'American', or 'modern', or 'stream-lined'.

'Her daughters-in-law are of several national and racial streams and of different religions. Tom married a Slovenian Catholic girl, Steven's first wife was of old New England Protestant stock, while his second wife is a Catholic woman of German parentage. Joe married a Protestant girl of German-French background. George, who is the first of the American (born) sons married a Catholic Irishwoman. John's and Tony's wives are of German Lutheran descent. Luke's is an American-born girl of Slovenian origin. Phil and Ted married Croatian Catholic girls born in Calumet. Frank's wife is of English stock and Fred's is Welsh.'

In the face of facts like these what is the meaning of the political Englishman's assertion that Britain and the United States are bound together by ties of blood? Whose blood?

Beyond Des Allemands the newly arrived sun revealed stumps of felled trees, stretches of deep mud, and fields with negroes working in them. Ahead of us on the smooth concrete highway rose tall, smoky chimneys and the inevitable aluminium-painted water tower which takes the place of the church spire in an English landscape. We were approaching Bayou La Fourche, the centre of 32,000 acres of delta land part of which is so threaded by drainage canals that it is called Little Holland. The chief crop cultivated in this region is sugar and the field labourer, as is general in the South, is black. On the outskirts of the town the sides of the highway are lined with the dirty, shabby, tumble-down, insanitary shacks of the negro workers.

It was harvest time and I watched, for many miles, all through the day, the darkies, men and women, cutting the cane with queer-shaped, long-bladed knives and singing as they worked. In some of the larger company-owned fields they were loading it on trucks which ran on privately owned tracks and hauled the freight direct from field to mill. In the smaller and independently owned fields the cane was loaded on rack-wagons and drawn by mules or tractors. The wagons, many of which are billowed out in a semi-circular shape, will hold from two to five tons each.

The delta land is not really good sugar country owing to occasional frosts, and to cool, wet weather in the autumn months. These conditions give rise to a low sugar content in the cane. If it were not for the import tariff there would probably be little or no cultivation of sugar in Louisiana. The tariff is, however, high enough to give the planter about twice as much for his crop as it would cost to grow it in the West Indies.

The other main occupation of the area seemed to be the catching and canning of sea-food, and on the waters of the Bayou La Fourche fishing boats were more prominent than barges carrying either sugar or oil.

At Morgan City, the 'Home of Sea Food', my interest in shrimps, oysters and other allied forms of nourishment began to wane. What did attract me was the bridge over the Atchafalaya River on which Morgan City stands.

Bridges in Louisiana are numerous but not ancient. The early roads of this state were waterways: in southern Louisiana alone there are two thousand miles of a navigable waterway. The *pirogue*, a canoe built to hold four people, was the means of travel.

Bridges of any size did not exist: there was no demand for them. Modern traffic has created that demand but bridge-building on a big scale is, anywhere in the low-lying south, of great difficulty. The land is so flat that there are no high banks to support a bridge at either of its ends. For a distance of over six hundred miles along the 'Old Spanish Trail', most of the towns are less than twenty feet above sea-level, while New Orleans, the lowest, is nowhere more than seven. Moreover the rivers which cross the trail are such an important means of communication that they must not be blocked.

The Atchafalaya River, once one of the outlets of the Mississippi itself, is now the gulf outlet of numerous waterways which together provide about a thousand miles of navigable water. The construction of the bridge presented the engineers with a variety of problems. Morgan City is only ten feet above sea level but the bridge had to be high enough not to interfere with navigation. On the other hand the river, at this point, is so deep that one of the piers is said to have the deepest foundations of any bridge in the world.

Across the bridge I entered the so-called 'Evangeline Country'. Within a few miles we reached the Bayou Teche, the river made famous by Longfellow in his poem *Evangeline*,

. . . . o'ershadowed by oaks from whose branches

*Garlands of Spanish moss and of mystic mistletoe flaunted.*

The name Teche is of Indian origin. In remote days an enormous snake had its home in the bayou. Its great size, its poisonous breath, and the furious lashing of its tail when it was angered, dismayed the Indians and spread fear wide over the country. At last a great crowd of warriors attacked the beast with clubs and arrows, and killed it; to commemorate their victory, they named the bayou — Teche, or Snake.

The river, which is navigable for eighty miles, passes through the towns of Franklin and Jeanerette, two of the most important centres in the Louisiana Sugar Bowl, to New Iberia, St. Martinville and beyond. It is, almost everywhere, a beautiful stream, bordered by festooned oaks. On its surface float picturesque house-boats and stern-wheel steamers: scattered along its banks are the less pleasant dwellings of negro workers.

I had taken a ticket to New Iberia and no farther, partly because the bus arrived there at tea-time, always a good time for disembarkation, partly because it advertised itself as the 'Queen City of the Teche', and partly because it was centrally situated between two places I wanted to visit. As I left the bus the driver shook hands with me and said 'I'm glad to have had you travel with me.' Why, neither my friends nor I can understand. I tell the story simply because it indicates the unfailing courtesy of these American bus drivers.

I found no reason why New Iberia should call herself a 'queen city'. It is a mediocre place with poor shops, public buildings of

no merit, and a muddy section of the bayou, but it is a convenient spot from which to visit St. Martinville, the home of Evangeline, and the Jungle Gardens.

St. Martinville is only ten miles from New Iberia and as there was no bus till noon I made my pilgrimage on foot. Many cars passed me but no one offered me a lift. Great lumbering wagons loaded with sugar cane, roared by shedding many canes along the road. Some of these were rescued by negroes who, knowing how best to enjoy the juice, chewed the cane and spat out the woody fibre. There was sugar cane litter all along the highway, crushed by passing traffic, wasting its sweetness on the concrete road.

Presently I came to a sign — 'Enter St. Martin Parish', a misleading indication of distance to an Englishman, because in Louisiana the word *parish* means *county*. A few yards farther on another sign read 'Evangeline Garden Night Club. Drink, Dine and Dance' — a most unevangelistic exhortation. Evangeline's name is everywhere. There is an 'Evangeline Hotel', an 'Evangeline Cafe. Good Eats' and in the cafe where I lunched at St. Martinville, a picture poster advertising 'Evangeline Hot Sauce', with the lady's ghost rising from the bayou as if resurrected by the strength of the mixture.

The proprietors of the cafe had no intention of allowing any of their customers to forget the historic significance of St. Martinville. A brief account of the Acadians in general and of Evangeline in particular appeared on the back of the menu and, at greater length, in a leaflet laid beside my plate. The story was told as it is by Longfellow and is sufficiently biassed to give an unfair impression of the action of Britain and a much too glowing account of the Acadians. The simple truth is that in 1713 Acadia (Nova Scotia and New Brunswick) was ceded by France to England and the Acadians were ordered to take the oath of allegiance to their new overlords. They refused, whereupon six thousand of them were deported to the British colonies in North America and scattered at various points from Massachussets to Georgia. About 1500 of them settled in southern Louisiana and of these a considerable number ended their perilous wanderings in the Teche country.

*Beautiful is the land, with its prairies and forests and fruit-trees;  
Under the feet a garden of flowers, and the bluest of heavens  
Bending above, and resting its dome on the walls of the forest.  
They who dwell there have named it the Eden of Louisiana.*

Here, isolated by wide swamps, deep rivers, innumerable bayous and remoteness from the American frontier of settlement they preserved their characteristics and their tongue, and never became completely Americanised. Their descendants (now called Cajians, a term which involves a certain amount of contempt) still remain in the Teche country and still retain a form of French speech. At St. Martinville French signs and notices appear in all the shop windows; children, on entering school have to be taught English; employees in all stores are compelled to be bi-lingual; even the darkies speak French and, during World War I, companies of Acadian recruits in the American army had to be drilled by French-speaking officers.

The hatred of the British, if not so intense as it once was, is not yet completely dead. On the menu card was a reference to the 'brutal English' while the leaflet spoke of 'the simple people whom England with ruthless hand thrust from their homes in far-off Nova Scotia, who sacrificed all for an ideal, accepting a decree of banishment rather than suffer the demands of a despot.'

The memory of Evangeline, whose real name was Emmeline Labiche, is as sacred to the Acadian as that of Joan of Arc is to the Frenchman, and St. Martinville, as her home town, is a mecca for tourists. The church in which she worshipped is, except for necessary repairs, exactly as it was when built. Outside is her tomb, now surmounted by a statue, the gift of Dolores Del Rio after she had finished making a part of the film *Evangeline* in this town.

There is, too, the wide-branched oak under which she met her faithless lover Gabriel (Louis Arcenceaux) and received such a shock on learning he had married another that she lost her mind, and thereafter wandered aimlessly for many days along the shaded banks of the Teche until death released her from her misery. Unfortunately, on its gnarled and twisted trunk is affixed a warning to visitors that there is a penalty of five hundred dollars

for chipping the bark. It is intended to scare the souvenir hunter.

Americans are the most shameless souvenir hunters in the world. I cut out of an American magazine the following reference to this bad habit. 'Hint to Hotel Guests: If you are incorrigibly light fingered, steal a Bible, and restrain your inclination to stuff your suit cases with pillow slips and towels. The Gideon Society replaces every year 23,000 Bibles pilfered from hotel rooms, but the linen companies are not so accommodating. This gentle reminder is offered — gratuitously — in the interest of the hotels which are too polite to insinuate you might remove anything from your rooms. . . . but you know you probably will.'

St. Martinville, slumbering on the rim of the zone of swamps, has been described as 'a quaint French town', and as 'a cute Acadian village' but in truth it is, on the whole, very much like any other American town. At the same time it has a slightly different atmosphere due to the popular romance with which it is associated and the presence of visible things, such as the oak, the church and the tomb, whereto one's fancies may be anchored. I think, however, that in my case this atmosphere actually depended far more on a state of mind than on the story and the relics, and was all the more powerful because that state of mind had been strongly impressed upon me in the days of my youth.

After I had seen all that a good tourist would wish to see I went to call on Andre A. Olivier, a most interesting personality, the descendant of a noble family of France and of an Acadian family from Grand Pré. He now keeps a simple store where he sells postcards, bedsteads, groceries, films, tobacco and a thousand other responses to daily demands. At the back of the shop he has a museum of old records, spinning wheels, earthenware, household articles and pictures, all relics of the Acadian days.

He keeps a register of visitors and when I wrote my address as 'London, ENGLAND', with the name of my country in capitals because I would show I was proud of it, he was at once my friend. The 'brutal English' of the past were forgotten in the friendly 'allies' of the moment. With a courtesy born of his personal and national ancestry he took me to a building at the back of the store, and, with great pride, told me it was one of the original Acadian houses which he had bought to preserve.

When he heard I had walked ten miles to see his town and had now two hours to wait for a bus to take me back again to New Iberia he insisted on driving me. All the way to my hotel he chatted of the past, of his grand-aunt tied to a stake to be roasted and eaten by cannibal Indians but miraculously rescued before the fire began to blaze; of a tribe of Red Indians who were black from the waist downwards and red only up above; of the Spanish who founded New Iberia and left traces of themselves in the good-looking, olive-skinned girls one sometimes sees in the streets; and, finally, of American education which he said was ruining the people by its devotion to non-essentials of which, according to him, football was the most detestable.

At the door of my hotel I said, 'Come and have a drink.'

'O.K.' he replied. 'I'll have a Coca Cola with you.'

'No you won't', I laughed. 'Give it another name' and he gave it.

My second excursion from New Iberia was to Avery Island, where another portion of the *Evangeline* film was made. This time, however, it was not literary associations which tempted me to set out on a journey, ten miles each way, along a road where there were no buses. With some trembling and a little shame I tried my luck at hitch-hiking. I was quite unsuccessful with the fat and prosperous, but in three successive tin cans, each of which looked as if it would not last another mile and driven by men whose clothes harmonised with their cars, I arrived within a mile or two of Avery Island and finished the journey on foot.

Avery Island is a hill, or rather several small hills, whose summits, though under two hundred feet above sea level, rise higher than any other land along the Gulf Coast from Florida to Mexico. In one of these hills is a plug of salt eight miles deep and six miles round at the top. Into this salt-filled space you could put the whole of Mount Everest and a dozen more respectably sized peaks. It holds the biggest salt mine in the world and contains enough salt to supply the needs of all the people in the world for a thousand years.

The top of the plug, covered with firm soil, projects above the level of the reed-crowned marshes and forms 'the island'. On the top soil are grown the hottest of peppers. From the salt and the



peppers, together with other ingredients, is made the famous Tabasco Sauce, the foundation of the fortunes of the McIlhenny family whose present representative, Edward Avery McIlhenny, is a very remarkable man.

He is an explorer who has taught Eskimo on the frozen tundras of the most northerly point of continental North America to play football; he is a hunter and holds a distinguished position in the annals of big game hunting; he is an author who has written two books, on natural history and on negro spirituals; he is a naturalist who has bred hundreds of varieties of plants, tamed alligators and kept three of them as pets; and he has saved the snowy egret from being exterminated by plume hunters.

His hobby is his private garden which covers about three hundred acres. From all over the world he has imported rare and exotic plants and so mixed them with the natural vegetation that there is little evidence, except in a few roads, paths and steps, of the landscape gardener. The name 'Jungle Garden' is fully justified — the estate is both a jungle and a garden.

By the side of one pool are scores of local live oaks, some of mammoth proportions, but between the oaks Chinese wistarias grow into trees up which climb giant wistarias from Japan. At their feet are flame-coloured daisies from Africa's Mountains of the Moon. In the iris garden, half a mile long, are seventeen hundred varieties of this plant, some of them from Siberia.

On the slope of the hill on which the owner lives is a dense forest of timber bamboos from China: elsewhere there are sixty-four other varieties ranging from the lace-leaved fern bamboos to the giants of the family. There are pink-fleshed grapefruit and finger bananas from Cochin China, lotus and papyrus from the Upper Nile, papyrus from the American tropics, soap trees from India, junipers, crêpe myrtles, and above all, the world's most complete collection of camellias.

The camellias, to the number of ten thousand plants, include five hundred varieties, gathered across the world from France to Japan, as well as others bred in the garden. They are as a rule not set out in any strict formal plan but are scattered about like wild flowers. In one circular clearing, however, they were massed against a background of palms and bamboos: in the centre

of the clearing a little fountain tinkled a song to the whispering trees, while the bees buzzed yet another tune amongst a sea of blossom. In a sunken garden, with the appearance of a natural hollow, the camellias were, for once, quite formally arranged about a horse-shoe dyke enclosing an emerald lawn.

Of azaleas, many of them in bloom though mid-December was near, more than a hundred varieties — white, pink, red, purple, magenta, single and double — contributed thirty thousand specimens to carpet, not a few flower beds, but acres. Other acres were given over to wild flowers or to thousands of chrysanthemums margined by clusters of sombre-hued evergreens. A long tunnel was festooned with wistarias of every shade from pure white at one end, through delicate gradations of pink and red to deep purple at the other.

By the sides of some of the roads is the lovely Oriental holly; on the slopes of the hill are great leather-leaved plants; on the pools are enormous purple water-lilies from Africa. But the biggest rarity in the garden is a small Wasi orange tree; only two other specimens exist, both in the private gardens of the Emperor of Japan. It appears that on one occasion Mr. McIlhenny saved the lives of three high-caste Japanese from a ship-wrecked whaler in the Arctic. He refused to accept as a thank-offering either a decoration or any financial reward, but asked for one of the three sacred Wasi trees; and the Japanese, having heard of the unique character of his garden, granted his request.

The gardens are almost as full of birds as they are of plants. Between the hills and surrounded by low trees is a big artificial lake where, every spring, snowy herons or egrets build twenty thousand nests and rear some twenty thousand families. This is 'Bird City'. It has an interesting origin.

An important British official from India, while visiting Mr. McIlhenny, told him of an Indian rajah who, to please his girl bride, built a vast flying cage of bamboo in which captured exotic birds were liberated and raised their young. In time the rajah and his bride died, the cage was neglected, the bamboo rotted and many of the birds fled, but those that had been born and reared in the cage returned even though their prison bars had been removed.

Captivated by this story, Mr. McIlhenny built a flying cage of wire over a small part of the lake, went out into the swamps himself, caught seven young egrets and then set them free in the cage. Here, properly fed, they grew, mated, built nests and raised their young. At the beginning of the next migratory season McIlhenny destroyed the cage. The egrets went off to South America for the winter but returned to the Jungle Garden the following spring. The return habit has never failed and there are now so many birds that, in order to provide them with nesting material, thirty truck loads of twigs have to be dumped in the 'city', and to provide sufficient nesting space the natural woodland fringes of the lake have had to be supplemented with double-decked structures of bamboo floored with brush. The newcomers contentedly build their nests with the material provided but the adults never feed in the lake. They fly wide over the coastal marshes in search of their own food and leave that in the lake for the youngest birds who are not yet strong enough to undertake long flights.

I wandered about the garden till long after hunger had struck the luncheon gong, but there was no place nearer than New Iberia where the call could be answered. Knowing the incomparable hospitality of the Americans I wondered if the owner of the garden might be persuaded to hand me out some bread and cheese but, as I stood debating the question at the entrance to the avenue leading to the house, I saw a warning, 'Keep Out. Bad Dogs'. I always obey warnings about bad dogs.

But as soon as I reached New Iberia, in the car of a friendly doctor, I sought a restaurant and ordered bacon and eggs.

'How'd you like your eggs?' enquired the waitress, 'up or over?'

'What's the difference?' I asked.

'Well', said she, 'if they're up they're kind of looking at you like.'

'Then bring them over', I exclaimed.

I could not face an egg that kind of looked at me like.

## CHAPTER XX

### INTO TEXAS

#### *New Iberia to San Antonio*

The next stage of my journey entailed an early departure, but when I left the hotel at six in the morning the radio in the lobby was in full blast.

'When did that start?' I asked.

'It never stops', replied the night clerk.

I think nothing in that hotel ever stopped. The news-stand was still open, and there were at least as many people about as when I went to bed the night before.

As far as Lafayette, a town overwhelmingly French in its population, we were still amongst the sugar plantations, but a little farther to the west we entered the Rice Bowl of Louisiana. In the south-west corner of this state rice is almost the only source of large incomes. In some of the parishes over three quarters of the cultivated land are used in growing rice. This fact indicates the kind of country.

The abundant water supply which rice needs is provided by a heavy rainfall, streams and artesian wells: nearly two fifths come from wells. That from the streams is lifted by powerful pumps and distributed by canals which are operated by private companies who furnish the water on a rental basis.

The land is very level, a fact of vital importance, because rice is grown in flooded fields, and a depth of six inches must be maintained through a period of at least ten to eleven weeks. The flatness of the surface permits irrigation over large tracts and facilitates the construction of low, broad dykes to prevent the water from running away. Because the dykes are low they offer no barrier to the heavy machinery which, in the United States, takes the place of hand labour in China and Japan, in preparing the soil and harvesting the crop.

The subsoil is a mottled blue and yellow clay which is extremely impervious so that the loss of water by seepage is negligible. If it were not for this impervious layer rice growing would be unprofitable on account of the expense of maintaining the proper depth of water.

As we passed through Rayne advertisements of 'Frog Dinners' were common. Frogs thrive in the rice swamps; in the restaurants of southern Louisiana frog's legs are a feature of every menu.

Among the passengers who joined us at Rayne were a number of negroes whose affectionate farewells to relatives were long-drawn out. The driver grumbled at the delay. 'There's nothin' slower than a nigger. They must kiss fifteen children 'fore they

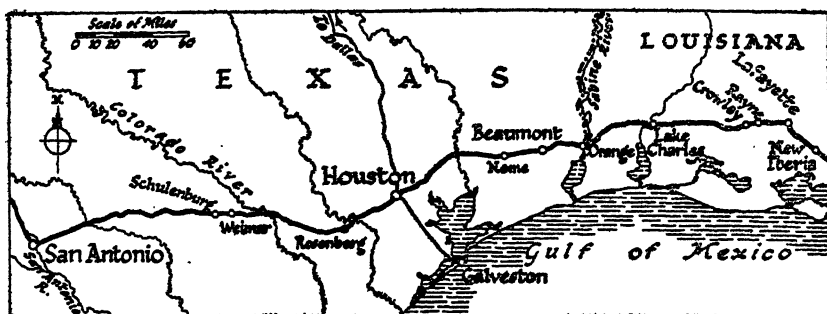


Fig. 33. New Iberia to San Antonio

board the bus. But I don't let none of 'em kiss me', he said. The darky passengers grinned widely at his comments and passed to their places — at the back of the bus.

The centre of the Rice Bowl is at Crowley whose county, settled by wheat farmers from the middle west, produces on large farms a quarter of the rice grown in the United States. Crowley has a government experimental rice station and calls its chief hotel 'The Rice'.

Westwards for miles the land is so level that its far distant horizons expand the mind and stimulate a sense of mystery. Mountains confine the view and suggest boundaries. Plains, especially when there are few or no trees, carry the imagination beyond the sky-line to realms where fancy can have her fling, and where even the feeble in body and spirit may dream of adventures.

The harvest was over: I saw nothing of the huge threshing machines and binders which handle rice in the same way they handle wheat on the prairies, but there were great heaps of straw where the threshers had been at work, and hundreds of cattle were feeding upon a stubble so pale in colour that it was almost white.

At Lake Charles we had to change buses. 'Don't forget your hats, purses, papers and bags', called the driver, 'and — don't forget your shoes.' The latter caution was intended for his despised negroes, some of whom, he knew, would have taken off their footwear to ease their feet.

Road-making across this land of marsh, lakes and lagoons has been, as already indicated, difficult. A fellow-passenger told me that ten to fifteen years previously there were places on this route where the swamp could be crossed only on horse-back or in a ferry-boat, and even now, on either side of the broad, hard highway, the land remains swampy. In times of heavy rains it is under from five to ten feet of water. The soil, black and sticky and difficult to drain, is covered with long, coarse grass which provides only poor pasture.

On the other side of the Sabine River, at the end of a bridge three miles long, we entered Texas, land of cotton, corn, cactus, oil and cattle. On the boundary line was a huge model of a long-horned steer with the legend, 'To show you you are now in Texas.'

Texas is bigger in area than any European country except Germany and Russia, and my journey from east to west measured close on a thousand miles. My first Texas city was Orange, modern and industrial, situated on a deep water channel. Along a high embankment through the swamps, bordered by dark pools which separated us from tall cypresses and marshes dense with hyacinths, we rolled to Beaumont, the third largest port on the Gulf of Mexico, with a thirty-four foot channel to the sea: it is a centre for the production and refining of oil.

Thereafter for many miles we came upon oil derricks and oil tanks, vile stench of sulphuretted hydrogen with its reminder of rotten eggs, and flames of natural gas burning at exits from the ground. Texas is reported to produce more than a third of all the oil of the United States and to contain more than half its proved reserves. As the United States supplies the world with sixty per

cent of its oil, and the price of petrol, in normal times, is largely determined for the rest of the world by the export from this state, I could not help, in those days of war, viewing the tanks and the derricks with more than ordinary interest.

The landscape of the oil-field, however, possesses no scenic beauty, and many of the small settlements through which we passed were, like Nome, nothing but highway junctions for the use of people engaged in developing oil. Their sole outfit was filling-stations, garages and very poor cafes, all, fortunately, painted white or in cheery colours. In some of the towns the street lamps, burning natural gas, were alight all day long; the gas is so cheap that the cost of letting the lamps burn is less than that of paying someone to turn them on and off.

To the Texan oil is the life of his state. He thinks in terms of oil, talks of oil, and dreams of fortunes made out of oil. The lobbies of the hotels throb with oil-field gossip, and the discovery of a new field is first-page news in all the oil cities of the state. Even the cattle, as if to show how much they appreciate one benefit which the industry has conferred on them, have acquired the habit of warming themselves at the gas fires of the wells when raw fogs roll in from the Gulf and lay down a thick blanket of chilly penetrating mist.

After about 250 miles of bus-riding I judged it time to alight and did so at Houston (pronounced Hewston). There is nothing at Houston which any tourist would deliberately go there to see, but there are few places which better show the courage, imagination and industry with which America faces big problems.

Houston lies inland, fifty miles north of Galveston, a port which has, in some years, ranked second in the United States. Houston, envious and ambitious, spent twenty million dollars in turning an old river bed into a great ship canal in the determination to be her own port and independent of Galveston. To feed the docks the city has erected huge plants for slaughtering and meatpacking, for the manufacture of cotton (the state grows more than a quarter of the country's output and claims that it could supply the whole world), and cotton-seed products, the cleaning and polishing of rice and the refining of oil; and has built hundreds of miles of railways and roads.



*Photo: Ernest Young*

The Alamo, San Antonio



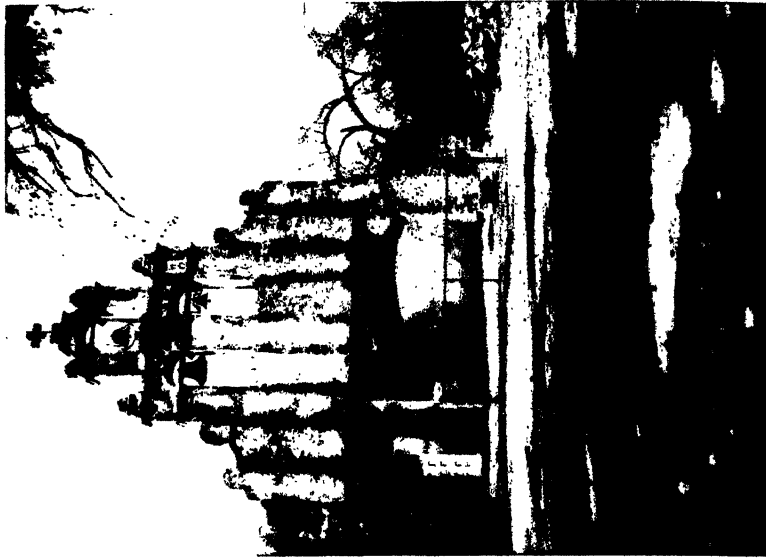
*Photo: Ernest Young*

San Francis de la Espada, San Antonio

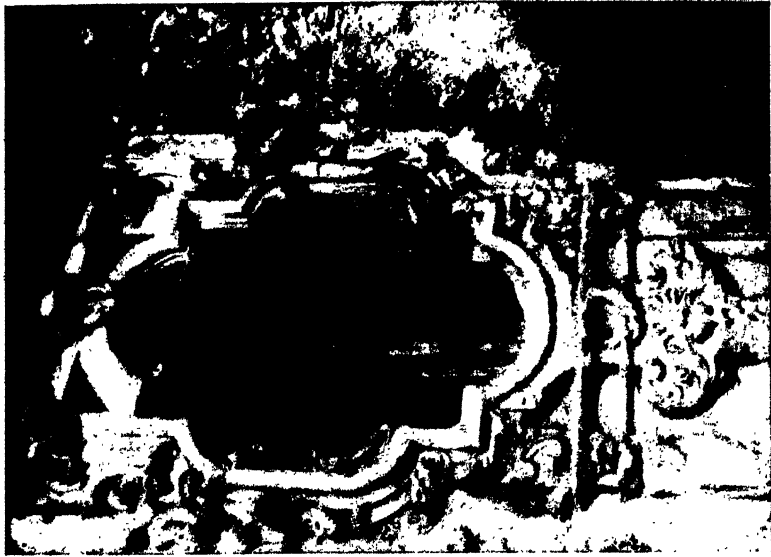




*Photo: Umphress Pictures, Black Eagle, Montana*  
Dining room of Spanish Governor's Palace,  
San Antonio



*Photo: Ernest Young*  
San Juan Capistrano, San Antonio



*Photo: Ernest Young*  
 Sacristy Window, San Jose  
 San Antonio



*Photo: Ernest Young*  
 Mexican Market, San Antonio



The King's Palace, Carlsbad Caves



Desert. El Paso

*Photo: Ernest Young*



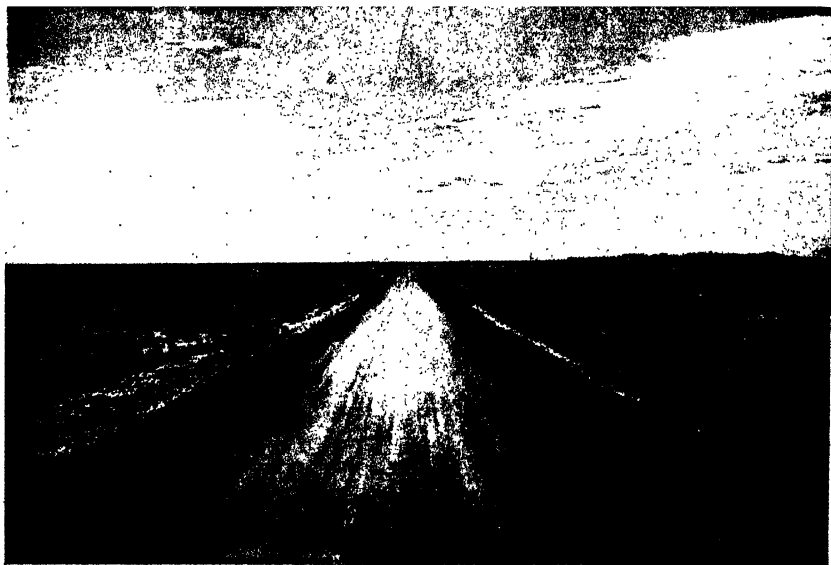
*Photo: Ernest Young*

Street Restaurant, Juarez, Mexico



*Photo: Ernest Young*

In the market, Juarez, Mexico



Desert Road

*Photo: W. J. Murphree, Hatch, New Mexico*

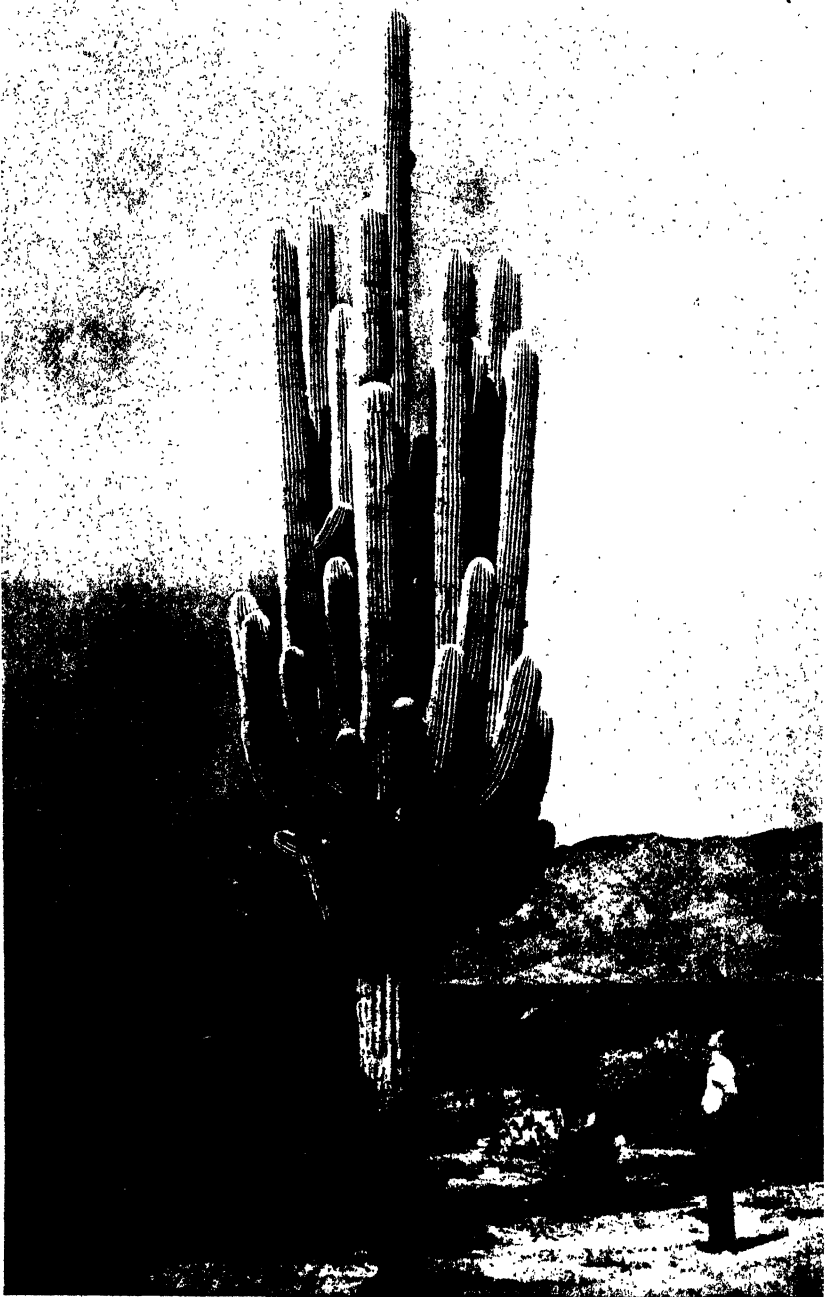


Yucca in bloom



*Photo: L. L. Cook Co., Milwaukee, Wisconsin*

**Bisbee, Arizona**



*Photo: Frasher's, Pomona, California*

The largest cactus in the world, a Giant Saguaro  
It is 43 feet high, has 52 branches, weighs about 10 tons and is approximately 250 years old

All this has been done without producing any of the defilement characterising industrial centres in Europe; Houston is no dirty Lancashire or Yorkshire manufacturing hive. Its streets are wide, the shops are handsome and some of the sky scrapers, topped with spires and turrets, are not without dignity.

Moreover, with all its bustle and business, its interests are not purely material. It supports a Symphony Orchestra, and has a number of good book shops where the last and most expensive of foreign as well as American publications can be bought.

Christmas was approaching and the streets were tastefully decorated and illuminated with thousands of electric lights, a custom which has recently captured the cities of the south-west. It was Sunday and the side walks were crowded with people, some of whom had come a long distance to see the display. One visitor exclaimed 'Gosh! If they had our Main Street in New York it'd make Broadway look like a dark prairie!'

I left the next morning, rising at six to catch the earliest bus. The sky was dim with fading stars but the dawn soon began to break. Light came creeping across the world; shapes emerged from the fading darkness; the horizon became a soft clear yellow, changed to orange, flashed with gold, blushed like a rose. The red eye of the sun rose above the plain, and the earth, derricks and all, was lit with the loveliness so often seen in flat lands when the first rays of morning come streaming through the stained glass windows of the east.

Soon a slight but continuous change in our altitude began. All the way from Pass Christian we had been but a few feet above sea level. At Houston our elevation was only sixty-four feet. Now we began to rise and when, in the evening, we reached San Antonio, 214 miles farther to the west, we had climbed to 716 feet. This, however, is not a very rapid rise and was almost imperceptible. The land, a farming country, with potatoes, corn, hay, cattle, poultry and pecan nuts looked almost as level as a prairie except where timber broke the sky line or a group of live oaks clustered together to make the little green islands which the Texan calls *mottes*. The names of the settlements — Rosenberg, Weimar, Schulenberg — told a story of German origins.

I alighted at San Antonio, intending only to rest and spend the



night there, but this city was such a rich and glorious surprise that I did not resume my western pilgrimage for another week. Having found a hotel and booked a bed I wandered off into the city. Unexpectedly I came face to face with a building called the Alamo and felt what a flag would feel, if it could, when it was set fluttering in a breeze. In front of me was a small, low building, of local limestone, flashing white in the sunlight. It was not really old, for it was built only in 1718, but it is remarkable for the simplicity and beauty of its design. It is overshadowed by a modern sky scraper on the edge of its landscaped grounds, but nothing can defeat its charm as it lies dreaming within the high walls which enclose also certain other remains of the old mission buildings. This precious architectural gem, the Alamo, is all that remains of a mission and a fort whose buildings served, under the Franciscan padres, as a house of worship, a school for Indian converts, and a haven for early settlers beset by unconverted redskins. The mission ceased to function as a religious institution in 1793 and the fort fell into decay. The chapel has been repaired and partially restored but, except for the roof and a stone paved floor, it is substantially the same as it was when it was built. Within the walls occurred one of the most dramatic fights in American or, for that matter, in any history.

In 1821 Mexico threw off the Spanish yoke and Texas, which was then part of the Spanish domain, became a state of the Republic of Mexico, though few Mexicans could be persuaded to settle in it. In the same year Stephen Austin (after whom the present capital of the state is named) was given permission to bring in American colonists. During the next four years nearly 25,000 settlers arrived from the United States, and Mexico began to fear for her hold on this part of her territory. The newcomers were treated with great severity. Trial by jury was abolished, excessive taxes were imposed, the Catholic religion was made compulsory, and the settlers were placed under military rule.

Rebellion broke out: the Mexican dictator, Santa Anna, marched to suppress it. In February, 1836, with a force of 5,000, he reached San Antonio. The Americans, a mere handful of 182 men, took refuge first within the surrounding walls of the old fortress and later in the chapel itself. For two weeks they held out

against terrible odds, suffering so much from want of sleep that they staggered as they walked yet persisting in their resistance until only one man was left. This last man, alone amongst the dead and the dying, determined that rather than surrender he would blow the building to pieces and perish with it. He was just about to fire the powder supply when he was shot. The last defender had gone; the Alamo remains his memorial.

The defeat of this faithful band was, fortunately, followed by victory elsewhere, and Texas was freed; but it did not immediately become a state of the United States. It established itself as an independent republic. Eight years later, however, Texas entered the Union not, as a Texan woman proudly informed me, 'By any kind of conquest but by our own free vote. And we kept the right to fly our own flag whenever and wherever we pleased.' That explains why, though the Stars and Stripes are flown on all Federal Buildings, the Texan flag is flown everywhere else either alone or with the Federal flag.

The Alamo is now always referred to as 'the shrine of Texan liberty' but it has not always been treated with the respect which such a shrine deserves. It has been used as a quartermaster's depot where old saddles, tobacco, blankets for Indians and ammunition were stored and as a warehouse for groceries and vegetables; in quite recent years a syndicate of eastern speculators has urged that 'the unsightly building which has long been an eyescore' should be pulled down to make way for a tourist hotel and an amusement palace!

To a slightly later date than the Alamo belongs the Spanish Governor's Palace, another building which helps to counteract the spiritual starvation which so often accompanies too much mechanical efficiency. The palace is a long, low structure of stone which has been plastered white, has rectangular iron-barred windows and a fine carved massive entrance door. On the keystone of the arch above the main door are carved the Hapsburg coat of arms and the date 1749. From the entrance hall one looks through a short passage to where a window, above a quaint winding stone staircase frames a vista of green vines and branches in the lovely little patio and the garden beyond.

To the left of the entrance is the Sala de Justicia where the

whip of Spanish viceroy and Mexican governor in turn cracked over unruly Texans and where, at intervals, gay dances were held. On the right is the intimate little chapel where the governor and his family attended Mass. The dining room, refurnished, like the other rooms, with Spanish or early Colonial furniture, has narrow tables, numerous candle sconces, a wine chest in the wall and a stone basin for the washing of hands before eating. The simplicity of the furniture revives the memory of the frugality of the outpost capital of Spanish Texas; the wine chest serves to show there were some compensations, and I have never the slightest doubt but that, on occasions, the dining room was the scene of banquets from which frugality was temporarily banished.

The kitchen is delightfully primitive; the necessary cooking was usually done on an open stone brazier with charcoal. Outside the kitchen are the baking oven, a herb garden and a wishing well. Then come the patio with pebbled walks, flowers, a fountain in whose basin water-lilies bloom, doors arched with grape vines and a spacious loggia with old tables and benches.

The walls of the main building are three feet thick. The high ceilings are of squared logs laid closely together on supporting beams of hand-hewn timber. The roofs are of earth and gravel, several feet deep to keep the interior cool in summer and warm in winter. Most of the rooms are floored with flag-stones worn with the tread of many years, but several of them are laid with tiles baked in the crude ovens of earlier days.

Like the Alamo this old residence has been rescued from an ignoble fate. After being a second-hand clothes store, a restaurant, and a bar room called 'The Hole in the Wall' it was, in 1929, purchased by the city and restored. I doubt if there is a more beautiful house, either old or new, in the whole of the United States. Under its roof I received exactly the same kind of emotional pleasure and surprise which I had felt at my first sight of the Alamo.

Even in Europe these two comparatively modern buildings would command affectionate admiration: in America, where there are so few buildings of this date and character, the force of the appeal of their architectural beauty should be tremendous. Yet, so a resident informed me, there has to be continual vigilance

to preserve them. 'We have', said he, 'to fight eternally the people from the north and the east who have come to live here — business men and the like — to maintain the romance of this city.'

The Alamo and the Spanish Governor's Palace by no means exhaust the attractions of San Antonio. To the same period belong the remains of four missions, tributes to the courage of the padres who two centuries ago brought to Texas the possibilities of civilisation. They were established on alternate sides of the San Antonio River and connected by an irrigation system, part of which is still in use.

By means of a bus to a starting point, then on foot, and finally by a lift in a private car, I saw all four of them. They are not, except in details, very different from Spanish churches of this date anywhere else, but so many of them in such a small area is a noteworthy fact and they enrich the heritage of romance which distinguishes San Antonio from any other American city known to me.

The first to which I came was the Mission San Juan Capistrano built in 1731. It demonstrates the plan of a typical mission establishment, though the work-rooms, living quarters and granary are either in ruins or in different states of repair. The chapel, rebuilt in 1920, has such bad pictures, poor statues and tawdry decorations that if one is not to lose a little of one's enthusiasm it is perhaps better not to enter.

Thence, to the Mission San Francisco de la Espada, I tramped through a parched countryside where crops can be grown only under irrigation: the unirrigated land surrounding the barns and houses is as bare as an asphalt paving. The poor Mexican farmers live in hovels which are masterpieces of tin can construction aided by a little wood. Each house had an outside fireplace, a well and a roof shelter of poles and grass to protect the cattle from the sun. Between the feet of the cattle strayed innumerable chickens, while dogs too lazy to bark and father, prone on his stomach, snoozed in the heat. The only signs of movement to catch my eye were several small boys playing marbles and a comely lass washing her hair in a bucket. Every one to whom I spoke used Spanish as the mother tongue: some knew no English.

On my way I came to the ruins of the first mill ever built in

this part of the country for the washing of wool, the dam across the San Antonio River which produced the power to operate it, and a number of old rock houses. My next find was one of the aqueducts built by the friars, still carrying water to a thirsty land as it did two centuries ago. The fathers were expert irrigation engineers. They would go up a river two or three miles above each mission, find a suitable point at which to divert the river into canals, and so grade their slopes as to ensure a constant flow of water by gravity.

The Mission of San Francisco de la Espada is on one side of a big open piece of barren ground which would, in a city, have been occupied by a flower-adorned plaza. The rough stone chapel has no bell tower but one of the walls rises into a gable pierced for three bells. Above the bells is an iron cross reported to have been made by the padres. The interior is simple: it contains some crude but realistic statues executed by Indian converts. They are of wood, have flexible joints, separately cut teeth, and glass eyes. The fortified tower, with three-foot thick stone walls, strong buttresses, and loop-holes for rifles and cannons, is said to be the only mission fort in existence.

By my weary road I plodded on to Mission San Jose, the 'Queen of the Missions'. It was completed in 1731, subsequently allowed to go to ruin and then sympathetically and authentically restored. Much can be said for and against such complete restoration, but as I give my admiration not to age but to beauty I have no objection whatever to seeing what was the appearance of a building when it was first erected. After all it was built for service and not as a ruin, however picturesque.

The buildings of San Jose cover a large area and, from many angles, present an imposing and massive appearance. The walls of the church are from four to over five feet in thickness. The west front of the church is baroque in type, a profusion of pillars, niches, saints, acanthus leaves and mouldings. On the south wall is a small but elaborate window, carved by a descendant of one of the builders of the Alhambra in Spain. To ease an aching heart he spent five years in fashioning what is considered one of the finest pieces of home-produced sculpture in America. As I do not like baroque I am not competent to express an opinion.

The three walls which enclosed the main plaza have also been restored: they are, however, something more than walls. They are made up of small, solidly built rooms which open into the grounds and look towards the church — the living quarters of the Indians who occupied eighty-four of these compartments. Each has a stone on which to grind corn and a flat piece of iron on which to cook corn cakes. The granary and the mill have also been restored. The whole gives a realistic idea of a mission and its varied functions.

There was still another mission I wanted to visit, the Mission Concepcion, but I was growing tired. Three ladies were talking to an official guide. I approached the group, waited for a lull in the conversation, and wilily asked the guide where I could take the bus back to San Antonio. Of course there was no bus, but the ladies were also going to Mission Concepcion, and in their car I reached the mission and, finally, my hotel.

The Mission Concepcion is within the city limits and is the best preserved. The facade is pleasingly simple; the interior has the original frescoes executed in vegetable and mineral dyes — red, blue and ochre; opening into the arcade which runs south from the front entrance to the church are the store room where the meat was cured, the living rooms with two vents, one for smoke and one for light, and the library with bookshelves of stone. The Mission Concepcion was a refreshing end to a day of delights.

I think it should, by now, be obvious why I lingered so long in San Antonio. If it were not that writers as well as readers can suffer fatigue and books may have limits I could go on for a long time. All the same, I cannot run away without touching briefly on a few other matters.

For instance there is a pleasing use, both in public and private buildings, not of concrete and steel, but of local stone. The Public Library, the City Hall, the San Pedro Play House are all of limestone; the huge and not too successful Court House (Romanesque with a green tiled roof and two fort-like towers) is of Pecos sandstone and red Texas granite. In the Vance and other houses are fine examples of pre-civil-war building with lumber, and there are also many examples of the use of adobe.

Amongst the latter the most interesting are the thick-walled building where General Cos signed the articles of capitulation after the Texans captured San Antonio, parts of the Ursuline Academy, and the little house where once O. Henry did much of his work when he was a reporter on a local newspaper.

I wandered many miles up and down the streets not all of which are broad and straight because they were built along twisting cattle trails. San Antonio has always been one of the leading cattle markets of a state which supports seven million head of cattle; cow-boys with ten-gallon hats and high heeled boots are common in the city.

Finally I arrived at the Mexican quarter where Spanish is the language of the inhabitants and the movies, and all public notices appear in the same language. In this quarter nearly seventy thousand people of mixed or Latin blood follow the customs of Mexico and certainly are not American even though they are American citizens. 'Little Mexico' is another world from the rest of San Antonio — dirty, untidy, foreign — where things move at a pace far removed from the hurry of the Americans. In the streets tiny individual stalls offer for sale pottery, basket work, candy, balloons, and brilliant paper flowers, such Mexican foods as *tortillas* (pancakes) and *pan dulce* (sweet bread).

Business on a larger scale is carried on in shops and in the big Haymarket Plaza. This, a busy fruit and vegetable market by day, becomes at night the centre of the outdoor life of the Quarter. Torches flare over the portable chili stalls which flank the boundaries of the plaza; people promenade; strolling singers, in broad-brimmed, high-peaked sombreros, braided jackets, dazzling multicoloured scarves, flowing ties and skin-tight leather pants, sing soft and tuneful songs. Here I listened to the 'Three Canaries', who serenaded my companion and myself as we sat in her car, and gratefully accepted by way of reward all the small coins in my possession.

San Antonio is a blending of the best traditions of colonial Spain, the old South and the robust South-west. It has something of the atmosphere of Spain, Mexico, and America with, as I have shown, a remarkable heritage of romance. The inhabitants, proudly and justifiably, refer to it as 'The City that is different' but to

appreciate the difference and the contrasts between the serene beauty of the old world and the noisy sky-scraping civilisation of the new, one must stay longer than an hour or a day and move to and fro upon unhurried feet.



## CHAPTER XXI

### SAN ANTONIO VIA CARLSBAD TO EL PASO

#### *With a side trip into Mexico*

WHEN I left San Antonio I entered, still in Texas, into that part of the United States referred to as the South-West. No longer does one reckon elevations in tens of feet. Between San Antonio and El Paso the road rises to a height of 4512 feet, though it falls to a little over 3000 feet at the latter city.

My first day's journey, of 430 miles, about the distance from Berwick to Lands End, necessitated another of those early risings, half past five, which I always make with reluctance. A hasty breakfast in a roadside hut, with rain and foggy gloom outside, was not the best beginning to a lengthy bus ride, but half an hour after we left San Antonio the fog, though not the clouds, had lifted.

The winding road traversed a thinly-wooded limestone country but the trees were close enough together to give, from a distance, the appearance of forest. Where these woods ceased the upland looked very bare but the broad valleys provided scanty pasture for a number of white-faced cattle. We were soon in Boerne (pronounced Berney) a clean little country town, itself quite undistinguished, but known as the 'Key to the Hill Country'.

The Hill Country is peopled by Germans, Czechs, Poles and French with the Germans in the majority. Here is another of those many areas in the United States where segregation prevents complete Americanisation. Many of the towns have German names; German is taught in the schools; German customs are maintained; and newspapers are printed in the German language.

Out of a green valley we climbed into a country whose character is indicated by a sign post pointing the way to 'Stonycreek Farm'. The surface of the ground was so stony that I sometimes wondered what the farmers grew or the animals found to eat.

The hillsides were bare of grass, and the natural vegetation of low tufty bushes did not appear a promising form of nourishment for man or beast. We were on our way to the limestone Edwards Plateau, a deeply eroded country of steep hills and narrow valleys which occupies the south-central part of Texas. We made our ascent by means of one of the numerous valleys which dissect its eastern and southern slopes. Farming, in the past, has in this area been limited to irrigated patches or to alluvial land near streams fed by springs in the limestone, but

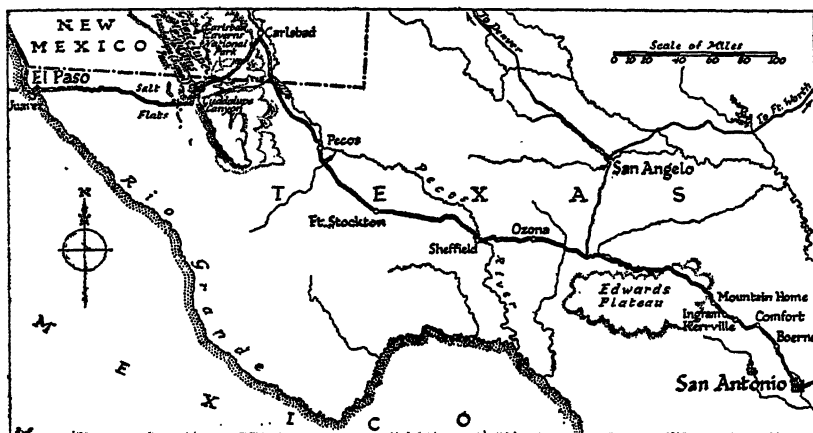


Fig. 34. San Antonio to El Paso

in these days there is a considerable amount of dry farming. The contrast between the green of the watered fields and the bare, grey limestone or the coarse brown grass is as sharp as that between a ray of sunlight and the shadow on its edge.

The plateau rose and fell in a series of undulations, from the summit of each of which were wide views of shallow basins surrounded by higher land whose sky line was level except for a few bumps, here and there, which might have been the heads of warriors popping up to search for approaching enemies. Shabby huts with patches of beans and chili peppers evidenced the presence of Mexican labour.

My enjoyment was somewhat marred by two women and a man who sang, with much vigour but little concord, a number of part-

songs. At first I wondered whether they were Welsh or German but as, in the course of twenty minutes, they had not sung 'Land of My Fathers' or 'The March of the Men of Harlech', I concluded they must be Germans — a very annoying people at times.

Our next scheduled stop was at the German-founded town of Comfort whose chief distinction, so I was told, was that it had the only armadillo farm in the world. I was prepared to be facetious about the name of the town and its industry but the name appeared to be well deserved. The town consisted of practically one long street, like many of the other settlements on this day's route, had well preserved houses mostly painted white, and was set in one of those astonishing areas of fertility which, at rare intervals, bring a smile to the face of the desert. Whenever I saw one I was lost in admiration of the courage and the vision of the first man who settled down to attempt to produce the smile.

North-west of Comfort, where cedar-clad hills crowded down to the highway, there was a region devoted mainly to the raising of sheep and goats, especially goats: Edwards Plateau is the goat centre of the United States. The goats are Angoras raised for their mohair. Goats will eat anything — 'from old boots to barbed wire and soda-water bottles' — and do pretty well on the bushes, though their plaintive cries, the usual language of goats, did not seem to express complete satisfaction with their fodder. Goats, as everyone knows, are common in arid or semi-arid lands and, on this thirsty plateau, could be said to be in their proper place.

But the region was not always quite as desolate as it is now. In Indian times, in order to preserve the pasture which then existed, dead grass was burned and shrubs were killed by the flames. When the first white men arrived there was plenty of grass. The newcomers, bursting with new ideas, did not fire the grass and kill the shrubs; they allowed the shrubs to grow and kill the grass. Then when any heavy rains came they washed the soil off the slopes and into the valleys leaving a great deal of desolation up above but depositing in the glades a certain amount of fertile soil.

We travelled for many miles through this land of goats and sheep, and then signs of increasing aridity, in the form of clumps of cacti, began to appear in the fields. Through Merryville in the

'Heart of the Hills', to Ingram, where every house is of stone — stone is plentiful and timber scarce or too valuable to fell — and there is a pleasing air of comfort and stability, we went up and over land which became ever more thirsty in appearance to a place called Mountain Home where scattered stones almost covered the surface, and a notice on a tree — 'Spring Water' — told its own story.

In some spots fields were flourishing without water amongst the seared wastes. The bus driver explained they were the result of some very successful dry farming. This driver was full of information. Some of his statements, however, did more credit to his pride in his state — still Texas — than they did to his knowledge, e.g., that Galveston is the second largest and richest port in the world, and San Angelo on the plateau was, before the depression, the greatest wool-market in the world!

When we entered the region west of the Edwards Plateau he stopped the bus from time to time to allow his passengers — there were only four of us — to take photographs of the bare gaunt mountains and the intervening valleys full of waste which had been washed, by occasional torrential rains, from the neighbouring slopes and summits. Rain serves little useful purpose in this area. There are no deep roots to hold the soil in place, and the erosion which occurs is so great that some of the isolated masses on the valley floors are half buried in their own debris. Some of them stand out like the level-topped kopjes of South Africa; others rise like isolated pyramids in the deserts of Egypt. As the rains are only occasional they never fill the basins, and the water never runs out to the sea; all they do is to scatter more rubbish. In the dry beds of the temporary torrents was the wreckage of many trees brought down, as the result of some severe cloud burst, from possibly miles away.

Yet, strangely enough, much of this barren land is used for raising cattle and sheep, and where it is irrigated, vegetables, alfalfa and small grains are grown. In the neighbourhood of Ozona, a small town which grew up round the only water hole for many miles, there are fine homes belonging to owners of cattle-ranches, and wherever there is any kind of a stream there are such trees as oaks, pecans and mesquites on the banks.

We wound down the steep western face of the highland to cross the Pecos River, mounted into the region of the Trans-Pecos Highlands and were again in a ranching region. I saw no sheep, but on one side of the road, some sixty miles beyond the river, was a notice 'Please Keep Out While Sheep Are Lambing'. Another, 'Watch for Live Stock', drew attention to the fact that these ranch lands are unfenced. They have to be unfenced so that the cattle can wander about in search of food. Where they find it was always a mystery to me. I saw a pathetic looking weary white horse staring ruefully at a heap of stones possibly speculating as to where the next single blade of grass might be found.

Of the many kinds of cactus, whose grotesque shapes gave a fantastic aspect to the landscape, I shall have to say much hereafter. Devilish and spiteful as they seem, they have their uses.

In the late afternoon, when the shadows were deepening amongst the distant summits, we caught up with a car in distress. Our driver stopped at once, explaining to us 'Out here we always try to help any one in trouble'. We couldn't tow the car as no rope was available but we offered to go slowly and push it. The owner of the car preferred to sit still on the chance that another would come along to his help, and we left him lonely but hopeful in the darkening wilderness.

We turned off the direct route to the west at Fort Stockton, founded at a spring which now waters 6,500 acres of melons and vegetables, and went north to Pecos, my chosen halt on the way to the Carlsbad Caverns. I don't imagine many tourists go to Pecos and I can think of nothing to say which would induce them to change their minds.

Pecos was a more interesting town when there was 'no law west of Pecos', hitching rails lined the street and gun-fighting cowboys frequented the noisy saloons. The following story illustrates its earlier character. One of the tough visitors went to the local dentist to have a tooth extracted. The dentist accidentally pulled the wrong tooth. The sufferer drew his gun, forcibly guided the dentist to the blacksmith's shop and, with the smith's shoeing forceps, drew every one of the poor man's teeth. 'Thar', shouted the original victim, 'Reckon thet'll larn you not to make any more mistakes.'

After a poor dinner, a series of which should have been fed to the cook, a punishment for his offences, I went to the bus depot to enquire about the cost of my next day's journey. A clerk quoted me a figure which I was quite sure was too high and I protested. He called another official and they argued the point until they at last agreed that my fare was \$ 5.80. The next morning, after having breakfasted at half past six, cheered by the news of the sinking of the *Graf Spee*, I went to buy the ticket. Another clerk was now in charge of the office and he said my fare was \$ 6.90. I was about to suggest to him that to quote three different fares for a journey of but a few hours did not strike me as according with my ideas of American efficiency, but fearing that any comment might add another dollar to the cost of my transport I refrained.

The way to Carlsbad repeated the sparse vegetation scattered amongst the rocks and dotted about the sand which had been with me the day before. I was amused by a notice, 'No Sand Hauling in this Pasture'. There was so much sand one might have thought hauling some of it out of the way would have helped a traveller by bus to discover the pasture.

The commonest houses to be seen in the desert are two-roomed adobe huts or one-roomed log-cabins with a lean-to. They are invariably surrounded by piles of debris. Some day they will, like many of the lower mountains, be half buried in their own rubbish. In the absence of dust-bins and refuse collectors everything which decays, breaks or is no longer needed is thrown on the ground. A chair no longer capable of standing on its legs, or any other wooden litter is used for fuel, but metal of all kinds — cans by the hundred, bits of ploughs, remnants of cars which were themselves but remnants — and mounds of broken pottery and bottles strew the barren earth with memories of vanished usefulness.

We changed buses at Carlsbad, so called because it has a spring containing the same mineral content as its European namesake, for the last lap to the Carlsbad Caverns at the foot of Guadalupe Mountains in the state of New Mexico. These caverns — 'the largest and most spectacular underground wonder in the world' — were discovered in 1901 by a cow-boy named Jim White, whom I had the pleasure of meeting. One evening he saw a dark,

moving column, resembling smoke pouring from a chimney-stack, coming out of a hole in the ground. The column consisted of what is now estimated at about three million bats winging their way on a night's forage. Jim went down the hole and did a little exploring. For twenty years afterwards he was continually telling people about the beauties and the extent of the underground palaces he had discovered, but no one believed him: Americans were only too familiar with boosters and boostings. At last, however, the government showed some interest, found that Jim was as truthful as George Washington, took charge of the caverns, made them into a National Monument, and took steps to render them accessible to the public.

The first visitors found their underground trip an arduous one, but by the expenditure, in recent years, of nearly a million dollars, much of the fatigue has been eliminated. The authorities are rapidly being repaid, as over a million and a half visitors have already paid a dollar and a half each for admission. By means of an electric elevator the aged, the lame and the lazy are dropped 760 feet below the surface in sixty-seven seconds. Those who prefer to walk, as I did, await the guides at the cavern mouth. There were on the day of my visit two hundred and fifty three of us. We formed up two abreast and by easy, well made, smooth, dry trails began a five mile tramp through those parts of the caves which are open to the public. From time to time the chief guide stopped us and spoke to us in the cultivated, scientific language of a university professor and explained simply and lucidly that at which we were looking. While on the march other equally well-educated men walked up and down the long line of pilgrims answering questions while one, at the rear, kept watch to see that no one was left behind.

I admit that this is not the ideal way to see the stupendous spectacle which these caves present, but it is, in the circumstances, the only way. I thought we might, perhaps, have walked a little more slowly, for though the temperature was only 56° F., I had to shed the overcoat I had been advised to wear.

The various caves together form a great chain of underground palaces, banqueting halls and amphitheatres, decorated by Nature with towering spires, massive pillars, slender drinking fountains,

giant crystalline curtains, weird replicas of totem poles, lily pads, frozen waterfalls, chandeliers with a thousand pendants and silent statues of saints, men and animals.

Fancy names have been given to the different sections, e.g., the King's Palace, a circular room gleaming with designs in onyx; the Green Lake Room; the Queen's Chamber, containing a bewildering collection of stalactites and stalagmites of amazing beauty and magnificence; the Papoose Rooms; Fairy Land and so on, all resplendent and impressive.

About half way along the trail we lunched in one of these subterranean halls, where for fifty cents we were provided with a good cold lunch.

After a suitable interval we were led into the Big Room. This is not, as the name might suggest, some large rectangular space but a number of rooms or passages without any natural divisions to justify special names for separate parts. The Big Room, more than three-quarters of a mile long, six hundred and twenty five feet wide at the widest part and, in places, three hundred feet high, is easily the biggest room in the world: it would hold the whole population of London. The floor is littered with enormous, jagged blocks of limestone which have fallen from the roof and with natural formations of colossal proportions: amongst them the Giant Dome, a stalagmite sixty-two feet high and fifteen feet in diameter, is one of the most striking.

In one part of this room we were halted, told to seat ourselves, and warned that the lights would be extinguished for thirty seconds. During that brief time we sat speechless and awed, in absolute darkness. Then, from somewhere in the distance, a quartette of beautiful voices sang, quietly and with great purity of tone, the Rock of Ages. We listened in reverential and inspiring silence. The effect, if theatrical, was simple and superb. I have never been so thrilled in my life.

Slowly the lights were turned on, one by one, beginning with the farthest away. When the cave was once more fully illuminated the guide said 'I shall now call the roll', and he read out the names of the states and foreign countries together with the number of visitors present from each area mentioned, ending with 'England. One.'



I am not sure whether these are the most beautiful caves in the world or not. I have memories of the Jenolan Caves in Australia with their enthralling translucent draperies and fantastic formations. But I can say this, that having seen both the Carlsbad and the Jenolan caves I am content to see no other but willing, at any time, if opportunity serves, to see either of them again.

The road from the caves to El Paso continued its desert pilgrimage amongst the prickly pears, Spanish daggers, Spanish bayonets, century plants, thorny earth-bound rosettes, mats of closely set spikes, sand and rocks. We skirted the base of the steep Guadalupe Peak; wound through the curved Guadalupe Canyon; descended into the desolate Salt flats, a desert of bleak, white salt; saw in the distance Signal Peak (9600 feet), the highest point in Texas, visible for miles across the plains, the peak where once the red man lit his signal fires; and, long after sunset, ran into El Paso (The Pass) at the junction of two of the first channels of traffic established by white man in America.

El Paso owes its name and most of its historic importance to its position. It is at the mouth of the lowest and most accessible crossing of the Rocky Mountains between Canada and Mexico, one used by Indians, conquistadores in search of gold, black-robed priests in search of souls, the historic Butterfield Stage and the modern rail and car. Here, too, the civilisation of shrewd Yankee traders coming over the Santa Fé trail from the north mingled with that of the Spaniard coming up from Mexico.

El Paso has a history comparable with that of San Antonio, but it has nothing in the way of historic buildings to bring the past to mind. In fact the most striking edifice, the College of Mines, is neither old nor Texan: it is copied from an ancient monastery in Bhutan on the southern slopes of the Himalayas. At the same time its cream-coloured stuccoed walls, bright coloured frieze in brick and tile, and its low-pitched roofs covered with crushed red brick do not, by any means, look out of place. For the rest, El Paso is almost entirely a commercial centre for a big mining and farming region, with the usual chain stores and a few conspicuous sky scrapers.

While I was at El Paso a furious conflict was taking place between an artist and a bishop. Amongst the mountains piled in

rugged confusion on every horizon is one on whose summit for many years had stood a wooden cross and up whose rocky sides barefooted pilgrims had climbed to say their prayers.

On the top of this mountain the devout of El Paso determined to erect a statue of the crucified Christ that should rival those in the Andes on the border between Chile and Argentina and on the Corcovado at Rio de Janeiro. They collected enough money to buy part of the mountain and to commission Urbici Soller, who helped to design the Christ of the Andes, to erect a statue twelve feet higher than the Andean one. The statue, partially completed, was brought to the mountain in pieces, dragged up by a tractor and erected with its face towards Mexico (a silent reproof of Mexican treatment of Catholics) upon a huge, simple base.

Then the bishop had an idea. In order that the pilgrims might the more easily reach the scene of their devotions he built an easily graded switchback road to the summit. This infuriated the sculptor. He said it desecrated the scene and destroyed the effect of his work. His Spanish soul was torn by indignation and distress and he refused to finish the statue.

This little incident reminds me that Texas has a reputation for religious intolerance and is famous for the number of its sects, preachers, and religious revivals. I gathered that religious teachers often used their pulpits for political as well as theological discourses and that their personal conduct was sometimes not beyond reproach. I have no experience on which to found any opinion but I can't resist telling one of the stories I heard on the bus which has some bearing on this matter.

A farmer had to leave home for two or three days at a time when one of the 'circuit ministers' was due for a visit. The farmer's wife begged her husband to stay at home. 'What shall I do?' she asked. 'I can't talk religion or politics and anyway I've too much housework to do to try.'

'It's easy enough', replied the farmer. 'If he's a Presbyterian, give him a Bible and a good fire and leave him alone. If he's a Baptist give him a jug of water, the sugar bowl and a bottle of whisky and leave him alone. But if he's a Methodist you can send for me. You're still too good-looking to be trusted alone with a Methodist preacher.'

As to the methods employed by some of these evangelists to attract a congregation the following notice from a local paper may be useful as evidence. '*The Fall of a Woman* will be the subject for Sunday evening at the First Baptist Church. Real facts and truths will be revealed. The eleven fans have been re-conditioned and they will help to cool the building' — and the congregation?

El Paso faces Juarez on the other side of the frontier between the United States and Mexico. I was told that though my passport was not visaed for Mexico, there would be no trouble about crossing the frontier, but I put it in my pocket, in case of need, and walked down to the Rio Grande.

The American approach to the border is, in some ways, as Mexican as Mexico. The cinemas show films with sub-titles in Spanish; shop signs and notices are in Spanish; the people speak Spanish and look Mexican. If this street could be suddenly dropped down in New York no one would recognise it as part of the United States.

I came to the bridge over the Rio Grande, paid two cents as a toll and walked into Mexico where I was greeted by scores of dirty Mexican children mostly begging, and scores of mangy, cowed dogs mostly basking in the sun. The first street was lined with souvenir shops, the gutters were filled with stalls. All pretended to sell genuine Mexican sandals, belts, sombreros and serapes; weird and primitive baskets, some of them made from the scaly armour of the armadillo, the tail turned over into the mouth to form a handle, the inside lined with pink or blue satin; handicraft in the form of bubble glass, decorated gourds, pottery, carved wood, tooled leather, hammered silver, wax statuettes, and pictures in feathers and straw. There were great displays of cards, with or without verses, suitable for all kinds of greetings from birthdays to funerals, those for lovers being rich in golden hearts and Cupids with their arrows. The animal world was further called upon to supply oyster shell ash trays, stuffed horned toads, stuffed rattlesnakes, snakeskin pouches and belts. Hundreds of these worthless things were decorated with crossed Mexican and United States flags and 'Welcome to Mexico'. For

the inner man were fruit and liquor, vividly coloured sweets, and many varieties of pastries, cakes and biscuits. All the latter were, surprisingly enough, protected from dust and flies in little glass cases.

Except for the eatables and drinkables practically everything looked exceedingly flimsy, cheap and inartistic and I could not imagine any sensible person carrying anything away even if offered as a gift.

Mixed up with the souvenir and the liquor shops were numerous shabby and questionable cafes to which guides from El Paso conduct American tourists for a glimpse of Mexican night-life. An advertising leaflet is responsible for the statement that these cafes 'are known from coast to coast for their music and service and may be visited with perfect safety'. They acquired considerable reputation in prohibition days, during which time Juarez became a famous resort. Any life or prosperity they still enjoy they continue to draw from the patronage of American visitors.

Taxi touts pursued me everywhere and ridiculed or cursed as I refused their invitations to take me round the town. After a few minutes I began to think I had seen quite enough, but I had heard there were an interesting church, a bull ring and a few other things which an excursionist should not miss, so I wandered on hoping I should soon meet with something less shoddy and more characteristic of Mexico.

At the far end of the long straight street was the plaza, on one side of which stands the church built by the padres and their Indian converts. It is approached by a flight of steps which all day long are lined on either side by the halt and maimed pleading for alms. The walls, unfortunately, show a lot of crumbling stucco and the woodwork a lot of peeling paint, signs either of poverty or neglect. The interior has less of tawdriness and tinsel than is usual and the carved mahogany beams supporting the roof, the work of Indian believers instructed by Spanish priests, is of great charm and merit. These beams were carried, on the backs of converts, across the desert from forests a hundred miles or more away. The excessive toil thus incurred was, probably, not due so much to devotion on the part of the faithful as to the severity with which they were treated by their spiritual fathers.

The walls of the church are of adobe, the commonest building material, in early days, in all parts of the arid and semi-arid south-west. Adobe is a kind of clay. To prepare it for building purposes it is placed in a shallow pit, mixed with sand and water and trodden under foot, after which cut straw and more water are added and the mixture is again worked with the feet. The semi-mud is then either trodden or hammered into brick-shaped moulds and dried in the sun.

These mud bricks are, surprisingly, very durable. Moreover they can, in the hands of Mexican workmen, steeped in the tradition of their craft, give rise to structures which are the despair of more precise but less imaginative builders. In this case the church was erected under European supervision and so has the appearance typical of the Spanish mission church.

To the north of the church is the market quarter, covering a wide space of ground and intersected by several streets and alley ways. It is dirty and squalid but full of 'pictures'. I prepared my camera for action. The leaflet from which I have already quoted about the cafes gave a warning about taking photographs — 'Do not take pictures derogatory to Mexico. You may be fined and have your camera confiscated'. With the exception of the church and the plaza all that was picturesque, characteristic and worth photographing in Juarez is in this dirty, insanitary shopping quarter and most decidedly derogatory to Mexico. I could not resist the temptation.

In one spot, devoted to scraggy chickens vigorously scattering fleas and feathers as they were hauled from wire-fronted cages, I made my first attempt. Almost before I could raise my camera to eye-level a small riot broke out. I was surrounded by a number of unshaven, turbulent villains who told me to 'Get out' and shook their fists in a way which advised a rapid departure. To the sound of mingled guffaws, threats and insults I beat my first hurried retreat.

Then I came to a place where, at the back of a number of dark holes, women handled pots and pans, and spicy mixtures steamed, stewed and frizzled. Outside the holes, in the street, at dirty rickety tables and on backless wooden benches, disreputable looking men and women were scooping culinary messes out of greasy

bowls. I hid between two carts and fired a shot. Just as I clicked, a burly ruffian passed in front of me. 'Did you take my picture?' he screamed and dropped a box, that he was carrying on his shoulders, to free his arms. I told him, truthfully enough, that his attractive exterior had not been registered by the camera, but he kept on repeating his question with ever increasing anger. I was humble and very much afraid till at last, though I'm sure he only half believed me, he picked up his box again and toddled off. At almost every step he turned round to watch me, scowling most unpleasantly and yelling 'You don't take my picture'.

The market, which sells everything a Mexican could use in the home, is a wilderness of passages made by building the stalls over the gutters, thus converting the sidewalks into narrow lanes. The open front of the stall faces the pathway, the rear is solidly boarded. A covering of rags stretched from stall to house keeps out the sun except where holes let through the light. Outside the passages, in the dust of the streets, bulky things like piles of oranges, sticks of sugar cane and bundles of herbs are laid on the ground for sale.

In one alley was a line of shoe-shining booths. It seemed a waste of money to pay for a shine when the streets are deep in dust but all the seats were occupied.

On my way back to the frontier I passed some little side streets which were clean and attractive. The houses were not really beautiful but their adobe structure gave them a quality marking them as belonging to the soil; in a word, they fitted. They were squat, one story high, plastered, painted in pale colours — mostly light blue or pink — and had spouts projecting from flat roofs through holes in a parapet to throw rain water direct into the gutter. In a climate where there is so little rain the spouts are not often called upon to perform. In these streets there were no donkeys, hens or pigs preying around the doorways.

When I once more reached the International Boundary the Mexican officials said nothing and let me pass, but the Americans asked for my passport, a very interesting document, almost filled with the stamps and marks of many different countries. The officer turned the pages over one after the other, never missing one and at the end said: 'Boy! You've travelled some. Welcome.'

As the Rio Grande is not in itself a formidable boundary it is guarded by numerous border patrols. A man on duty at anyone of the posts sits high up in the air in a little cabin fastened to a tall pole. By means of a telescope he carefully surveys the frontier. He is in wireless connection with the other posts and any suspicious movement is at once reported and investigated. Beyond El Paso, all the way to the Pacific coast, the border is marked by stone or iron markers, so set that any one of them is visible from the next.

I lingered on the bridge to look at the river. 'He who once drinks of the waters of the Rio Grande is sure to return: he who once breathes the pure air of the southern desert will never be content to live elsewhere.' So they say. Should I go down to the river and drink? No! I don't want to return to Juarez.

That night, in one of the evening papers I read of a negro who had been brought before the local court and accused of stealing a turkey. His defence was unique. He said the bird had flown straight into his arms and he was taking it to its owner. The judge, probably moved by the extenuating fact that it was only five more days to Christmas, let him off with a caution.

## CHAPTER XXII

### EL PASO TO PHOENIX (ARIZONA)

SOON after leaving El Paso we ran, at last, out of Texas, and sliced off a corner of the state of New Mexico, a boundless stretch of red-purple, bare, undulating country, majestic in its desolation.

In the bus were two women, one with a long stupid face like a horse, each with a penetrating voice and a shrill, harsh laugh. One was going to her home in Phoenix, Arizona, the other to visit a friend in Los Angeles. Said the lady of Phoenix, 'Don't you go to Los Angeles! Stop in Phoenix. Los Angeles! It's so damp you can't dry your stockings. You never see a decent car. You can't keep one clean for the fog.'

This kind of depreciatory comment, when the inhabitants of one state discuss any other state but their own, is common. When I was in Minnesota a citizen told me, 'California has sandstorms and earthquakes. Catch a Californian unawares and he may whisper in your ear that the fog-horn in Santa Monica will drive you to distraction, that in Long Beach your car will rust away and soon fall apart, that Hollywood is old fashioned, down at the heel and altogether out of date, that San Francisco is too cold and Los Angeles too hot, that San Pedro is smelly of fish and Japs, that the oil wells on the beach at Huntington clank horribly and smear everything you've got, that it is dreary here, sickly there and safe nowhere.'

Some day I hope to find a Californian to tell me what he thinks of Minnesota. Personally I am in love with both states.

When the Arizonan woman had finished her remarks about California she detailed her family history ending with an account of the death of her husband.

'He broke his neck in three places', she related.

'Did he die?' enquired her fellow passenger.

'No. Not for nine months. You see they put his neck in plaster.'



'But it killed him at last?'

'No it didn't. He died of stomach trouble.' And shrieking with laughter she added, 'Can you beat it?'

For some distance the desert was marked with patches of irrigated land where the last picking of cotton was taking place, cattle were grazing on corn-stubble, cottonwood trees were turning golden yellow, and bales of alfalfa were standing ready for truck or train, but in between the patches were dull, dun wastes with a thin growth of thirsty vegetation or sheets of alkali as white as snow.

I was fortunate in my neighbour, a fine, strong, intelligent boy of fourteen. 'I don't suppose you find this country much fun', he said in an apologetic tone, adding what Stevenson described as a hoary, hackneyed old falsehood 'There's nothing to see.' But when he found I was actually interested in every detail of the passing scene, he kept up a stream of chatter and information. 'That's broom weed', he said, 'no use for anything — not even brooms. This bit of land's good. The farmer's taken care of it and not let the cattle eat it bare. He's given it time to rest and now he's got some grass.' I looked in vain. I couldn't see a blade.

'You're only allowed to keep so much stock per section but the inspectors don't come often and some farmers are fools. See those hillocks. They're the roots of the mesquite holding the soil together. In a storm the wind and the rain wash away the soil all round but the mesquite don't care. He can't be beat.'

The mesquite is common along the bottoms of stream courses or in basins which receive floods. Like many other desert plants, because of the scarcity of water, it sends its roots deep underground in search of moisture. They are often forty to fifty feet in length and go down fifteen to twenty feet below the surface where one would think the occasional rains could never penetrate. They often reach a yard in thickness and are as resistant as oak. Because they can be used for uprights and roof-beams in house building, for poles, and for an excellent fuel which gives a bed of hot coals and burns to a fluffy white ash, they are in constant demand; *digging* for timber is a common occupation.

Above ground the mesquite is thorny, stocky and close-grown; in some of the low lying sandy areas it forms dense thickets.

There are two varieties, the honey-pod and the screw bean. At its best the honey-pod grows from fifteen to twenty feet high. Each variety produces seeds which formerly were a staple article of diet amongst the Indians of the South-West, and even in these days of canned foods they are still collected and eaten.

The beans are pounded into meal, boiled to a kind of mush, and dried in cakes of sulphur colour, so hard that an axe seems the proper implement for their partition. If fermented in water with wild honey they give a pleasant mildly intoxicating drink.

To live in the desert one must be able to make the most of the little the desert provides, and it is stimulating to think that this unpromising looking shrub is a source of food, fibres, fuel, soap and medicine.

'The beans', said my encyclopaedic informant, 'aren't bad, you know, but they're very fattening and they make the Indians lazy.'

'That's yucca', said I, pointing to one of the few plants I recognised and proud to make an intelligent remark; but I immediately spoiled the effect by adding 'but it's no good for anything — is it?'

'Of course it is', snapped the youngster. 'You can make rope, cord, cloth, sandals, belts and laces from the fibres, needles from the spines at the ends of the leaves, soap from the roots, sleeping mats and saddle blankets from the leaves, and what you don't want for anything else you can grind up for fodder.'

I made a similar unfortunate remark about the lack of water.

'Water!' said the boy. 'There's water everywhere down under the soil but it costs a lot to pump it. Of course you can have a windmill but if there's no wind there's no water.'

'It's a pity there isn't more rain', I suggested.

'No mister, it ain't. It's a good thing there ain't more rain. If there was more rain the farmers'd grab up all the land and there'd be no more cattle.'

He left me at a place where a sign by the roadside proclaimed 'This is God's country. Don't drive through it like hell.'

After a run of a little over two hundred miles along a road so smooth and level that I could write legibly while the bus was travelling at fifty miles an hour, we entered Arizona and the

Arizona Highlands, hot and dry, where a cow needs much energy and much space to get a decent cud to chew.

Arizona is a weird romantic land of stern, harsh desert. In its low humidity and clearness of atmosphere it resembles Upper Egypt. It has more sunshine than any other part of the United States, and in summer the heat, pouring down from the unclouded sky and bounding up from the soil, burns the skin, stings the eyes, and reduces man to a stream of ooze though, at dawn and dark, breezes from the mountains may give a little relief. The rainfall is scanty and irregular.

This desert area covers not only the whole of New Mexico and

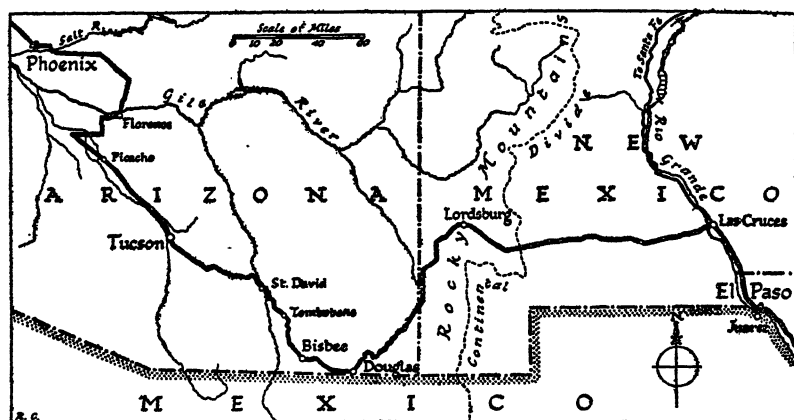


Fig. 35. El Paso to Phoenix

Arizona but extends over much of the bordering states of Texas and California and beyond into Mexico. It must not be imagined as an area of absolutely bare rock, sand dunes and alkali flats, though all these varieties of surface occur from time to time. Close at hand most of it is barren enough, but the distant view is often green owing to the presence of much desert vegetation, the chief forms of which are the amazing, barbaric, terrifying cacti which make this most extraordinary and fascinating landscape another kind of world.

The mountains rise up majestically, clothed in soft tints of amethyst, lilac and pearl but streaked with purple where their barren faces are wrinkled by chasm and canyon. Lights and

shadows chase each other as the sun moves from dawn to dusk giving an almost unbelievable variety of effect. The plains and plateaus, wide expanses stretching away to remote horizons, offer a mysterious and awe-compelling spectacle of great silence and grim desolation.

Unpromising as this area appears from the point of view of human habitation it was occupied sparsely by those Indians called the Basket Makers, centuries before the Christian era; by cliff dwellers who preferred eternal sunshine to a regular rainfall, built irrigation canals, and erected cities and temples of sun-dried brick; by other Indians who supplanted the cliff dwellers.

Forty years after the discoveries of Columbus, and eighty-one years before the Pilgrim Fathers landed, the Spaniards had begun the work of white exploration, colonisation and the founding of their mission system. In time, trappers and prospectors from the east became familiar with the lonely wastes; adventurers, miners, cattle men and farmers followed in their wake, all seeking fortunes in strange places, but only the hardiest of them could face this cruel world of thorny spines, fang of reptile and claw of beast.

As I was putting my things together preparatory to my descent for the night at Douglas, one of the mining towns of the Arizona Highlands, I heard the horse-faced lady telling her companion that she had just come back from a visit to Europe. 'Switzerland', she said, 'is real pretty. And I had two weeks in London. Isn't it funny that there are no schools in London?' Then I up and spoke quite a piece and left her almost sobbing, after which I was sorry for the manner of my corrections, for I have heard English people make equally silly remarks about 'America', especially those who have been only to New York or Hollywood and nowhere else.

Near to Douglas a little girl whose mother had touchingly put her in my charge and told me to see she got off at the right place said, 'See all them fumes. That's Douglas.' The valley was filled with dense white clouds from giant copper smelters. As the white-hot streams of slag were poured on the dumps they threw off bright flashes of flame turning the clouds into billows of fire.

Douglas is one of a number of towns which have been built in this part of the world in connection with the exploitation of cop-

per. Life in some of them depends entirely on copper. If the price of the metal is high the town flourishes: if it be low the town dies. There is more than one place on the Arizona Highlands where the railway lines have been pulled up to be sold for scrap: they were no longer needed.

I had not, however, come to Douglas to see copper mines or smelters. In a hotel in another town I had picked up a folder advertising a hotel at Douglas which said 'Buffalo steaks served at popular prices every day of the year from our own herd.' My object at Douglas was to eat buffalo steak, but unfortunately there was no such steak on the menu that night.

The next morning I rose at five and had my breakfast at the cafe in the bus station. Again I watched the dawn — always a lovely sight in the desert. The craggy peaks which stab upwards at the sky lost their midnight indigo and flushed pink with the first indications of the coming day. In a few moments soft rippling waves of tender light sprang spoke-like through the crumpled hills, ran down their faces and gave to this harsh land of venom and thorn a tenderness gripping like a pain.

Twenty miles from Douglas is Bisbee, another mining town, the highest settlement (5294 feet) on the western trail. It is built in a gorge between two rich copper mountains. The houses cling to the slopes like swallows' nests, and the streets, to rise at all, have to depart from the usual rectangular pattern. In time of heavy rain a torrent of water tears through the gorge and drowns the main road. Over red earth and through the thorny vegetation of the desert we climbed up Tombstone Canyon to a height of a little over 6,000 feet. The sides of the canyon were dotted with small bushes as if there had been an epidemic of green measles.

Here and there water was available. Wherever this was the case the country lost its aspect of fierce defiance and once more smiled. One village, St. Davids, had a pool of water to every house, shaded by trees under which cattle rested and chewed but, on the whole, the farther we went, the more barren became the face of the land and the bigger the cruel, evil cacti which day by day struggled for life in these eerie solitudes where with savage fury the sky pours down a relentless flood of fire.

Tombstone — ghastly but appropriate name — was once an

iniquitous, profligate town peopled by desperadoes whose gun play was based on the theory that 'six-shooters is arguments'. The local paper is *The Epitaph*! If the spirits of any of the deceased ruffians who once inhabited Tombstone should ever revisit the scene of their former exploits they may be surprised to find, amongst half-starved bushes and under the heat which lies heavy over the dusty acres, the biggest rose-bush in the world. It spreads out to cover a space of about two thousand square feet and bears hundreds of thousands of blossoms. The branches are trained over a pole-supported roof beneath which the guests of the Rose Tree Inn dine and drink their Coca Cola.

Thence to Tucson, founded in 1552, where I had thought to hunt for some reminders of the past but, hearing that the town was full of film people making pictures in the desert, I changed my mind and passed on. I am too old to appreciate the charms of the 'stars' and too poor to pay the extravagant hotel prices which attend their presence.

As we bowled out of Tucson, the usually clear cut outlines and sharp shadows of the desert mountains became blurred: the sky was heavy with clouds. I had but just said to myself 'These clouds mock the land with promise of rain that rarely falls', when it did fall, with a force and volume which explain how gravel and rocks are rolled down the stream beds when the clouds burst. In Bisbee, as I learned later, not only rain but snow, hail and sleet fell for over two hours. The temperature slid down like a skier on a snowy slope. It dropped to within eight degrees of freezing point; and I had dressed, appropriately I had thought, for my passage through a region of severe heat and drought!

The disturbance soon passed: the distant heights rose as islands in a sea of mist; the pools in the road vanished as if by magic. In less than half an hour the land was as dry as the moon and we were in a part of the desert, near Picacho, distinguished by the giant theatrical saguaro (pronounced sa-wah-ro).

The different kinds of cacti are not scattered uniformly over the whole of the desert: special areas have special varieties. The saguaro, for instance, is a familiar sight in southern Arizona but only isolated specimens are found in the Colorado Desert to which I was making my way. It is a fearsome plant, fuller of bristles

than a porcupine, rises like a sentry against the sky in a fluted green column to a height of forty feet and may live for two hundred years. Cacti, like camels, store water, and the pulpy interior of the saguaro is a reservoir of moisture, collected whenever rain falls, by a vast root system near the surface of the ground.

Almost suddenly the desert appeared to vanish. We were in the Salt River Valley fed by water conserved by the Roosevelt Dam in the heights of the Arizona Plateau. Everywhere, as far as the eye could see, broad fields of living green were drinking from miles of sunlit threads of water, a fine spectacle in a land so near to that where the saguaros, the giant barbarians of the desert, raise their spiky posts into the dry air. Nearly half a million acres have been brought under cultivation. The main crops are oranges, lemons, grape fruit, grapes, melons, long-stapled cotton, lettuce and other kinds of vegetables. The statistics of production are colossal. It is indeed impossible to realise what they mean. The imagination fails to visualise ten thousand huge railway trucks filled with lettuce or five thousand loaded with melons leaving the valley year after year.

The centre of the area is Phoenix, founded only two years before I was born but now having a population of close on 125,000. It is a town of fine shops and department stores, large office and government buildings, charming houses with a Spanish air, and broad streets and drives bordered with palms and orange groves, shrubs and flowers. Everywhere there were signs of great prosperity. Old shabby buildings were giving way to new ones, some of great dignity, touched with Spanish and Mexican features.

The streets, as I saw them, were crowded with Christmas shoppers, a motley assortment of negroes, Mexicans, Indians, Americans and at least one Englishman. Spanish was being spoken as often as English. Almost everybody had arms full of parcels. Even a blind beggar could afford to sit to have his shoes shined, though I found it difficult to imagine what satisfaction he got from the polished leather.

Phoenix at Christmas was reasonably cool, but during the four months of summer, when the sun shafts fall in burning showers and beat into helplessness any man or beast on whom they strike,

it is a city to be avoided. At such times no man wears a collar: the rules of polite society allow him, if he so wish, to go about as bare-necked as a modern woman.



## CHAPTER XXIII

### PHOENIX TO PALM SPRINGS

I left Phoenix the day before Christmas. The bus was crowded with people going to visit their friends and relatives, some of whom lived in very remote places. To a late-comer who fretfully asked 'Where is there a seat?' the driver replied 'On the floor



Fig. 36. Phoenix to Palm Springs

amongst the parcels.' Whereupon a Boy Scout rose and sat himself on a box.

At the crossing of the Hassayampa River I remembered the legend which records that he who drinks of the waters of this river, looking up stream, never speaks the truth again. I deliberately looked in the opposite direction but as the bus did not stop and, in any case, there was no water in the river, my desire to retain my reputation for truthfulness must rest upon some other basis.

On the opposite side of the river was Wickenburg, the 'Dude

Ranch Capital of the World'. Dude ranches are common over all the ranching areas of the West. They vary widely in their comforts and their charges. Some are run as side-lines to the business of serious ranching; others are run almost entirely for visitors. At the latter every effort is made to provide luxuries and entertainment.

An idea of one of the most elaborate, Remuda Ranch, may be gained from its own advertisement — 'Just what you expect on a ranch — cows in the hills, corrals full of real horses and sure-enough cowboys, singing cowboys — trick roping and full of yarns — going about their intensely practical concerns while you look on from your saddle — or perhaps from a wide wicker chair on the sun porch.

'Guest accommodations are very fine: in main building, in Patio Court, or separate bungalows. All have hot and cold running water, electric lights, luxurious baths and showers, reading lamps, large closets, fine heating arrangements, wide windows looking out on unforgettable views, beds you love and abundant linen.

'Swimming pool, asphalt surfaced tennis court and a dozen other indoor and outdoor sports. Own rodeo area on ranch. Here impromptu rodeos are put on for the entertainment of guests.

'An accredited school is maintained for children of guests, in separate buildings.

'Here the distinguished English writer Priestley wrote several of his charming books.'

We made a stop at Salome, a tiny place founded by Dick Wick Hall, author of a number of western stories, who said of it 'This would be a good town if it had more people and a fine cattle country if it had more grass and water.' The gas station offers 'free meals and gas every day the sun does not shine.' A roadside cafe, decorated with grotesque designs of a slim female proclaims 'This is Salome where She Danced.' On the opposite side of the road is a white ramshackle wooden structure, the Court House of Yuma county. In big black letters on its shabby walls it clamours 'Get Married. Never Closed. Step in in the Daytime: Ring the Bell at Night.' Neither the heat nor the loneliness has been able to crush the spirits of the two hundred inhabitants of Salome.

By way of Granite Pass we entered a wild region sentinelled

by the tall fluted saguaro and littered with small blocks of granite wrenched from the peaks by erosion and forming vast slopes which, in some cases, reached half way from base to summit. We dropped into another basin, with hills like islands on the floor, rimmed by dark-hued, bare-faced ridges forming a ragged horizon in every direction.

Then, as if by a miracle, the ground was alive with acres of a yellow flower which resembled a small Michaelmas daisy, and I sensed for the first time the floral loveliness which, at certain times of the year, completely hides the floor of the desert.

Arizona ended at the Colorado River. This muddy stream, 'too thin to plough, too thick to drink', has had many names — the River of Rafts given by two Franciscan friars because they saw the Yuma Indians crossing it by this means; the River of Good Guidance, given by Alarcón, a Spanish explorer; the River of the Firebrand, given by Melchior Diaz because on its banks he saw Indians carrying torches: the River of Good Hope; the River of Martyrs: and, finally, the Colorado or Red River, a name well deserved on account of the bright red colour of the waters and the shore. The redness is all the more striking by contrast with the brilliant green of the poplars and other vegetation on the banks.

On the Californian side we were all turned out of the bus while our baggage was examined to see that no one was in possession of citrus or other fruit which might carry plant diseases into that state and so endanger the fruit crop, valued at five hundred million dollars. The delay was short. Off again, across a plain patterned with green fields of alfalfa, along a road fringed with feathery tamarisks, and then over a low ridge the Colorado Desert suddenly shot into view.

The Colorado Desert, so called because of its nearness to the Colorado River, is but one section of the Great American Desert, a wide area which includes also, in the east the Arizona Desert over part of which we had just come, the Mohave Desert north-east of Los Angeles, the San Bernardino Desert west of Yuma and the Sonoran Desert east of the Gulf of California.

The Colorado section of this immense and almost unpeopled waste is a great depression roughly triangular in shape, each leg

of the triangle measuring about a hundred and fifty miles. The base lies along the Mexican border; the apex is at San Gorgonio Pass near Banning. On the west are the San Jacinto, Santa Rosa, Santa Ysidro and Laguna ranges of mountains forming a towering wall that separates the desert from the sea which lies so close at hand: on the east are lower ranges which include the San Bernardino, the Chocolate and others. The surface drops from a height of 2,320 feet above sea level at the apex to 246 feet *below* sea level at the Salton Sea. It is, of course, habitable only where water is obtainable.

The amount and nature of the water supply vary in such a manner as to divide the desert into three distinct sections: —

i. San Gorgonio to Palm Springs where water is obtained from snow-fed supplies in the canyons of the near-by mountains. The quantity is small and agricultural land is therefore limited.

ii. The Coachella Valley where water is drawn in relative abundance from wells sunk deeply in the sands and gravels.

iii. The Imperial Valley where constant and ample supplies are now derived by irrigation from the Colorado River.

I came to anchor, on Christmas Eve, at the oasis of Palm Springs. This oasis lies at an elevation of 452 feet right at the base of the San Jacinto Mountains, and receives its water from streams fed by melting snows. Without them life would be impossible and the land surface would be nothing but an unbroken, treeless expanse strewn with cacti, naked rock and drifting sand.

The oasis offers several different types of attraction which vary in their attractiveness according to the character of the visitor. No two people ever see the same scene, even from the same point, with the same eyes, and the resultant effect upon the observer becomes even more differentiated if that scene contains other living members of the human family. To the majority of the visitors, as many as 8,000 in a good season, the charm of the place is the new toy village built to satisfy the whims of film stars and those who wish and can afford to live for a while where and how the film stars live. A few, but only a few, are called by the floor of the desert, the canyons or the gaunt, splintered peaks of the mountain barriers lifting their purple heads above the pale grave face of the plain.

As already stated I arrived at Palm Springs on Christmas Eve. There was snow on the high mountains and Christmas trees illuminated by fairy lamps in the streets, but somehow there was no feeling of Christmas, and on the morrow I did not feel I was missing any of the usual festivities when, to save my purse, I sat on a high stool at the counter of a drug store and ate my share of a Christmas turkey in an atmosphere of face-powder and lipstick, pills and patent medicines, whisky, magazines, cigars and dog ointment.

The explanation was not the unfamiliar surroundings of either the desert or the drug store but the nature of Palm Springs itself.

As a village it is too unreal to suggest any connection with ordinary human life. It has been developed as an ultra-smart winter resort for the rich, and looks like a series of settings for a musical comedy.

The main street, really the only street that matters, runs parallel and close to the foot of the San Jacinto range. It is three or four miles long, with a width, on Sundays when packed with cars, of three or four feet. In it are hotels, business offices, cafes, night clubs and shops with creamy white, lemon or buff coloured walls, red, blue or yellow doors and brilliantly coloured roofs. The pavements are laid with slabs of tinted concrete and bordered by pink and white oleanders or feathery green tamarisks.

The shops — souvenir shops, date shops, candy shops, dress shops, camera shops — sell everything the rich are likely to buy on a vacation. Conspicuous amongst them are those displaying silver and pottery of alleged Indian or Mexican workmanship and those dealing in women's apparel. Much of the so-called 'native' work had the appearance of cheap factory-made produce: if it really is genuine it does no credit to any native art: most of it was ugly and clumsy.

In one of the shops the California dealer presented me with a card which had on it, 'Nothing is wrong with our State except that entirely too many of us get up in the morning at the alarm of a Connecticut clock, button a pair of New York trousers to Ohio suspenders, put on a pair of shoes made in Massachusetts, wash in a Pittsburgh tin basin, using Cincinnati soap and a cotton towel made in New Hampshire, sit down to a Michigan table and

eat pancakes made of Minneapolis flour with Vermont maple syrup and Kansas City bacon fried on a St. Louis stove. We send money to Ohio for tyres, and at night, after smoking a Pennsylvania cigar, we crawl under a New Jersey blanket to be kept awake by a d - - - d dog, the only home product on the place, wondering all the while why ready money and prosperity are not more abundant in this wonderful State of ours.'

Shopping is continuous except for intervals devoted to eating: these intervals were not simply those of the regulation meals. It was not possible to go down the street without meeting one person after another, adults as well as children, eating ice creams, salted nuts, pop corn, pea nut brittle or chocolate bars, and littering the pavement with cast-off wrappers of gold and silver paper, paper bags and discarded nut shells.

The visitors, as if to keep up the illusion of a musical comedy, dressed as if they were members of the chorus. The men inclined to ordinary suits in extraordinary colours — a pale green shirt with dark green trousers, a bright yellow shirt with chocolate collar and trimmings, or to theatrical imitations of cow-boys and Indians — ten gallon hats, embroidered coats, blue jeans and chequered shirts, bright silk neckerchiefs, silver studded belts and high black boots with touches of red and high heels.

The women, even frail old grandmothers, were partial to pyjamas, to trousers that emphasised pronounced curvatures, or to bare necks and arms, and legs clad in shorts so abbreviated that they could not possibly be further shortened. The general result was a close approach to nakedness and much more indecent. Children masqueraded as miniature cow-boys or Indians, cracked toy whips and blew toy trumpets.

Honey-mooners, whose names appear as such in the local papers, strolled about hand in hand or with their arms round each other's necks. Children dragged their apologetic parents from place to place and treated them with little outward respect. Nothing appeared natural. I wanted to set it all to music. If a man with a little baton had suddenly appeared in the street and lifted his arm I should not have been in the least surprised to see the whole of the population begin to sing and dance. Palm Springs is comic opera that does not know it is comic.

Sophistication reigns. The chief store had a drinking basin for dogs, fashioned like a holy water stoup in the wall of a church, framed in coloured mosaic and labelled 'Desmond's Dog Bar'. At night the cocktail bars and restaurants were, as a rule, dimly lit, often only with candles, so that you might eat or drink in a gloomy interior, as if it were not possible to be romantic or jolly except in a tomb or a cellar.

At a restaurant where I asked for rye bread, the waitress looked at me with an all too knowing eye and enquired 'Are you allergic to wheat?'

At another, where I was experiencing a little difficulty in selecting my food, I apologised to the waitress, saying 'You'll think I'm very fussy.'

'No', replied the pink-draped maiden with lips and finger nails in matching tints, 'I think you're lovely', for which agile lie I raised her tip.

At the counter of the drug store where I oftenest took my tea, the white-coated attendant asked me 'Where've you been to-day?'

'To Whitewater Canyon.'

'Anybody else there?'

'Not a soul. But I didn't mind. I had something to eat, wine to drink and a book to read.'

'Ah', interrupted the man as he buttered my toast with a brush, 'I see. It was a case of a book of verse, a jug of wine, a loaf of bread and thou —'

'The only snag', said I, interrupting the soda-jerker in his quotation, 'was that there was no thou.'

Just as one is amused and pleased by a good musical comedy so I was amused and pleased with this sunny, laughing, artificial spot in the desert. Psalm Springs is not an ideal place for a poet or for a philosopher seeking that desert calm in which were born the great religions of the past but, because the oasis is small, it can be easily left behind. Most of the visitors who go to Palm Springs, however, do not wish to leave it behind. They have no intention of wasting their time trying to capture the lure of overwhelming silence, the utter crushing loneliness of the uninvaded wilderness in order to listen to the message that the aged earth speaks to willing ears. The giddy Hollywood crowd, enjoying its

nervous breakdowns, would be completely out of place amongst the wrinkled mountains, the blazing stretches of sand or the thorny vegetation which eternally fights for life, and where there is no excuse for levity.

Visitors to Palm Springs, pursue in the desert the same amusements — riding, tennis, golf, dancing — which they could pursue anywhere else. Some of them motor, between cocktails, dances and games, to such spots as are easily accessible by road, and according to their temperaments, go into ecstasies, real or assumed, about the palm-filled canyons or wearily ask, as I heard one of them, 'What is there to see here?'

A single street separates this amazing oasis, overrun with people mostly rich and idle, always feverish and gay, from a small Indian reservation called Agua Caliente, on account of its hot springs. These springs, now used by white and Indian alike, have been valued by the Indians for medicinal purposes ever since the oasis was first inhabited. The Indians, very few in number, belong to the once widely scattered Coahuilla tribe who originally occupied the west side of the Coachella valley. In 1883, however, they were rounded up and placed on this reservation, the land to the west of it, nearest to the water sources, being reserved for the white settlement.

The Indians farm little dusty holdings, work for their white neighbours, hire themselves out at fruit-picking and harvest times to more fertile areas not too far away and, during the tourist season, rent out cottages they have built or let some of their ground as a parking space for trailers. Their wives do laundry or other household work in the village. Unfortunately they have, as a rule, lost all their ancient craftsmanship and no longer make baskets, rugs or pottery.

Beyond the reservation you can walk, unhindered, for several miles across the flat floor of the desert. The walking is easy going if you take a little care. The ground is firm without being hard to the feet and there is usually plenty of space between the plants. Each plant, in fact, owns a certain area around it, as a kind of personal possession on which it admits no other plant to trespass. Within quite well-defined limits its iron roots seek moisture that the eye of man or beast fails to discover.



Seen from a distance the floor appears a dreary grey, level, monotonous expanse of dry treeless land where there is no past and no future, nothing but an everlasting solitude. On closer acquaintance it shows more attractive features. The vegetation is far more varied than one would expect and includes not only the characteristic cacti but flowers, shrubs and even small trees. There is no way, however, of making this acquaintance except on the back of a horse or, better still, on foot.

The flowers, of which there are seven hundred species, are most plentiful from February to May so that, as my visit took place in December and January, I missed the full glory of the flower show, though in some sandy stretches millions of verbena blossoms already covered hundreds of acres with their delicate rose-purple clusters, and other millions of sunflowers covered yet other hundreds of acres with a carpet of gold. Later on in the year, as I afterwards found elsewhere, there would be the same riotous distribution of desert forms of primrose, lily, heliotrope, larkspur, lupin, columbine and poppy.

Much of course depends on the weather. For a complete exhibition of the incomparable beauty of the desert wild flowers there must be a plentiful supply of winter rain, and during the season set for their blooming the days must not be too hot or nights too cold. To me it was not the spectacular wide-spread masses of blossom that were so fascinating as the multitudes of single, tiny flowers, one here, one there, looking so tragically lonely and brave that I consciously tried to avoid treading on their wee sweet faces.

The shrubs, small of leaf and thick of bark to prevent loss of water, conform to the grey-green toning of the floor. They seldom grow large: the chief exception is the creosote bush which sometimes reaches heights of from ten to fifteen feet. It is the most characteristic plant of the desert and thrives where other shrubs give up the fight against drought and heat. The roots penetrate deeply but must be widely spaced so that single specimens are usually several feet apart with a circle of bare sand round them. The ground close to the base is tunnelled by ground squirrels and kangaroo rats.

The bushes rise from the ground in a cluster of brittle woody

stems, covered with a thick, smooth iron-grey bark, which branch towards the top and put forth twigs on which grow tiny darkish green resinous leaves. The vivid green of the shining fretted foliage is grateful to the eye in the wilderness of other grey green or greeny white plants. Both the leaves and the wood, especially after rain, have a refreshing smell of creosote. I was fortunate enough to find some of the bushes in bloom: the creosote, which is amongst the earliest of the desert plants to blossom, has bright yellow flowers followed by fuzzy-covered globular fruits.

Creosote provides a domestic medicine-chest for the Indians: poultices are made from the boiled leaves; the boiled down liquid is taken internally as a mild laxative or applied externally as a tonic for the hair.

The most interesting plants are the cacti. There are close on forty species indigenous to California and representatives of a large proportion of these are to be found in the Colorado Desert. G. W. James, in his 'Wonders of the Colorado Desert', tells how he once asked a desert prospector with how many varieties of cactus he was familiar.

'By Gosh!' said the prospector, 'you city fellers have no idea how many kinds we got. I know every one of 'em. There's the 'full of stickers', 'all stickers', 'never-fail stickers', 'sticks everybody', 'the stick and stay-in', 'the sharp stickers', 'the extra-sharp stickers', 'big stickers', 'little stickers', 'big and little stickers', 'stick while you sleep', 'stick while you wait', 'stick 'em alive', 'stick 'em dead', 'stick unexpectedly', 'stick anyhow', 'stick through leather', 'stick through anything', 'the stick in and never come out', 'the stick and fester cactus', 'the rattlesnake fang cactus', 'the stick seven ways at once cactus', 'the impartial sticker', 'the democratic sticker', 'the deep sticker' and a few others.' Together they make a cheerful lot of companions on a desert stroll.

Round about Palm Springs I think the commonest one on the desert floor was the one called the deer-horn or stag-horn on account of the resemblance between its branches and those of a deer's horns. As a rule it is rather low, sprawling and much branched. Its hundreds of wicked needles are a fearsome menace, typical of the iron hate which is one of the desert's moods even

as the blossoms on its fierce dry stalks are typical of another.

I only once met any one on the actual floor of the desert though there were many people in cars on the roads: above them the dust rose in a stinging blanket. My single human encounter amongst the cacti was with two very white-skinned gentlemen who had stripped to the skin and were sun bathing on one of the wider of the barren patches. They smiled at my unexpected approach. We exchanged greetings, experiences and names.

'We're Irish', said one. 'My name's Boyle and his is O'Flannagan.'

'Boyle's a good Irish name', I replied, 'but O'Flannagan's a better.' O'Flannagan hurrahed.

'I'm from the north', said Boyle 'and he's from the south.'

'And here in the desert', I added 'you seem to have achieved a perfectly peaceful union.'

'Yes', responded Boyle 'but we had to go into a desert and an American one at that to do it.'

## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE DESERT HILLS

IT was not easy at Palm Springs, even when alone upon the plain, to get that feeling of the desert which I had experienced with so much pleasure in other parts of the world. When I turned my back on the coloured houses, pavements and umbrellas, the beauty parlours, the silhouette artist, the bowling alleys, the orange trees, the palms, the garden beds, filled with roses and edged with pansies, and walked out on the uninvaded earth, I had counted on renewing a sense of being in touch with the infinite, but I failed. There were so many hard roads with speeding traffic that any fear of being lost or of dying from thirst would have been ridiculous.

Several times I wrapped myself in the star-lit blackness of the night, seeking that quiet contentment which through all the ages has been in the desert an inspiration to the imagination of man, but the sounds of village revelry always reached me and the neon lights interfered with the stars. I would try the mountains.

Owing to the fact that Palm Springs is built right at the foot of the slopes of the San Jacinto range, the mountains are easily reached. San Jacinto range sends out, at Palm Springs, a long spur which encloses a narrow gulf of sand. Into this gulf open a number of canyons, mostly approachable by road, which are the objectives of many tourists. From the mouths of the canyons spread out wide fans of debris littered with blocks of stone. These, where there are no roads, are difficult to cross except by zigzagging between both the stones and a rich growth of the largest varieties of cactus.

I began with the canyons, the nearest of which is Tahquitz Canyon. This great gash in the mountain side might have been formed in a fit of violence by some giant hand ruthlessly ripping a way through the barriers. I visited it twice. The first time I missed the easy trail, stumbled and fell amongst the boulders,

some as big as cottages, and made frequent contacts with vicious thorns. The second time I found the proper trail and followed it,

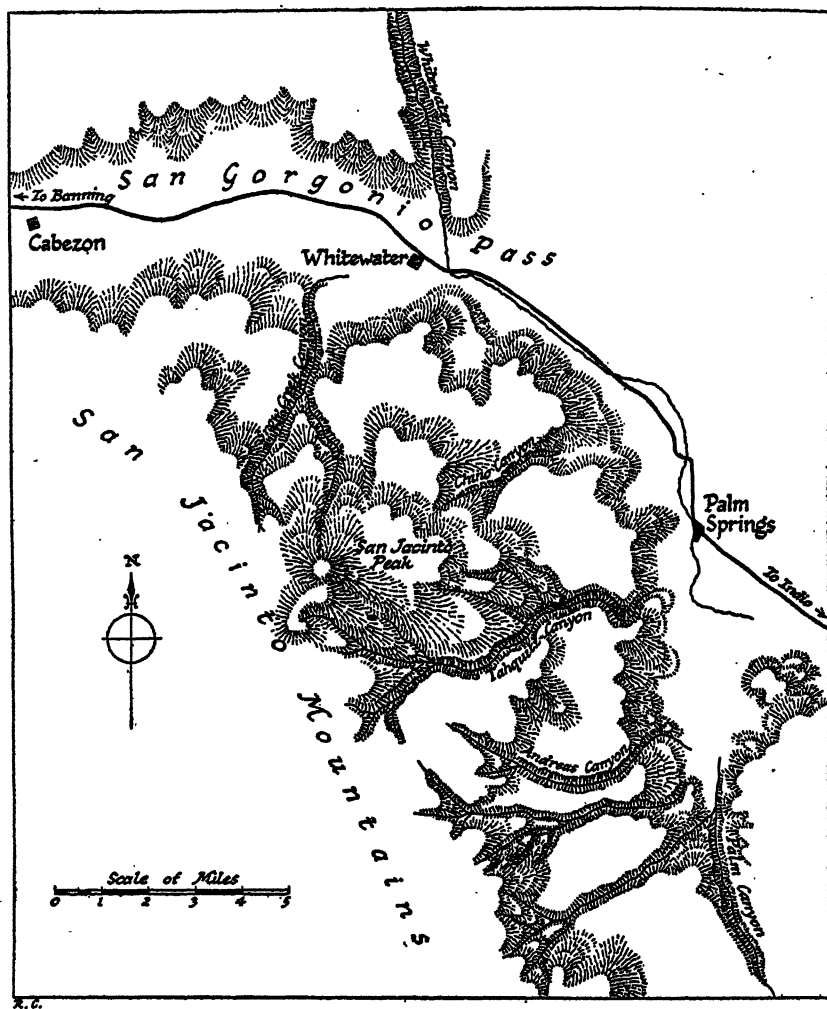


Fig. 37. Palm Springs District

through a gradually narrowing passage whose sides were masses of loose rock, pink or white or, where varnished by time, dark shining brown or rusty red, to the head of the canyon. Here,

where the walls rise sheer for hundreds of feet, I sat me down by the side of a pool and watched the beautiful Tahquitz waterfall leap over a cliff of granite. The noise of this fall, together with that of many rumblings occasionally heard, has given rise to the legend that this is the home of Tahquitz, the evil spirit of the Indians.

The basin was surrounded by cottonwood trees, their leaves then a radiant yellow, proudly raising their heads in disdain of the more lowly sober-coloured plants lying not far from their feet. The contrast between the falling water and the tree-bordered stream on the one hand and the desert at hand's reach on the other was astonishing. I could have stayed there indefinitely watching the tree tops and the peaks cutting shadows in the slanting rays of the sun had it not been for the presence, on the other side of the stream, of a pair of young lovers, fondly clasped in each other's arms, oblivious of desert, of torrent and of me.

I fled. I was tempted to follow a faint trail on and up beyond the falls but it was obviously hazardous. I heard afterwards that scarcely a year passes when someone does not lose his life in attempting it. I turned round and slowly descended the canyon, beyond whose stern dark walls shone the brilliantly lighted plain. The most conspicuous objects on the plain were two huge, dome-shaped, absolutely bare sand dunes, winnowed and rippled by the wind, the higher one about five hundred feet high, lying over towards the eastern edge. They have been formed by the wind which blows almost continuously from the sea through the San Gorgonio Pass. The wind which forms them slowly moves them for there is little to hinder their progress. When fierce winds take the place of the more gentle ones the motion of the sand becomes rapid. Slow or fast, as they travel onwards, they bury whatever lies in their smothering path.

Instead of going directly back along the road by which I had reached the chasm I wound my way round the base of the mountain, across the talus, skirting a belt of cactus called the Bigelow cholla, a variety which favours the southern slopes of barren or rocky hills. The plant is bushy and not usually more than four feet high but the trunk is strong. It is the spiniest of all the chollas and its nickname — 'teddy bear' — may give some idea

of the number of the spines. It has to be treated with respect, for these spines, dark on the lower part of the trunk where they are dead, pale where they are new and shining like clusters of glass needles, are fearful to contemplate and worse to touch. One Bigelow cholla by itself has a venomous appearance: hundreds or more of them, seen against the sun, with the light glistening through the needles, form a regiment of perfect fiends scoffing at you and defying you to advance.

By careful steering I came out on the highroad opposite a little cafe with a big 'EATS' outside it. The hour made the invitation acceptable and I entered. The woman behind the counter told me her mother was Scotch and Irish and her father French and German but, said she, with a kind of pugnacious pride, 'I'm pure American.'

My next excursion in search of peace was to the Andreas Canyon. The going was good enough, along a hard paved road, till I reached a toll-house. The toll levied for passage beyond this point is a source of revenue for the Indians of the Palm Springs reservation. A great part of the canyon area is in the reservation and the tolls charged for admission are either divided amongst the holders individually or used for the maintenance of the highways.

The road beyond the toll house was sadly in need of a little expenditure. It was inches deep in dust. I soon quitted its winding gritty depths. I cut across the talus slopes, through wash-outs, crawled between boulders and wind-tossed bushes, guided both by the mountain wall and the dust rising from cars following the road. Nothing crossed my path except one animal which went like the wind, probably a trade rat or pack rat (which is not a rat), a ground squirrel or an antelope chipmunk: I couldn't tell. And it went so quickly that I didn't worry, especially as all the little creatures I have just mentioned are harmless to man.

The really dangerous creature amongst the stones is the rattlesnake, the best known native reptile in the United States, for it lives in all of them. The books say that, as a rule, a rattlesnake is more anxious to avoid a man than a man is to avoid a rattlesnake. I don't believe them. No rattlesnake could possibly be half as much afraid of me as I am of it. Rattlesnakes, so I was

told, were not numerous in this desert, but a single one would have been quite numerous enough for me. It was also reported that rattlesnakes hibernate from about October till about April or May. But how was I to know that I would not wake an odd one, whom it might be more dangerous to disturb in his winter slumber than the proverbial sleeping dog. Fortunately I never saw a rattlesnake either that day or any other round about Palm Springs, and after a time I began to believe all the things I had read in the books, especially the very comforting one that people rarely die of the bite of a rattlesnake — if the bite receives prompt attention!

After a few miles amongst the Bigelow chollas which, so say the Indians, 'jump at you', round about and in and out amongst the boulders, with an occasional excursion up and down the steep, loose pebbly banks marking where some angry flood had once ploughed a passage, I saw in the silence a patch of green, brown and gold, a grove of shining trees.

Trees meant water. I made for them, struck the dirt road again and reached the mouth of Andreas Canyon. I stepped, as it were, straight off the desert into a grove of Washington palms with a clear crystal stream threading its way amongst a jumble of boulders, and gleefully singing to its death in the wastes.

Washington palms are found native only in the Colorado Desert and in parts of Lower California, and there only in places where the supply of water never fails — by the side of streams, near springs in foot-hill canyons and at isolated oases where underground water is near the surface. Full grown specimens may reach a height of sixty to seventy feet but the average height is lower than this. The almost uniform column of the trunk bears a dense crown of longstemmed broad green fronds. New leaves appear each year at the top of the tree: old dead ones hang down forming a thick thatch round the trunk. In a grove, such as that in Andreas Canyon, where the palms are tall and close together, walking between the sheaths of dead leaves reminds one of walking between a lot of hayricks. You do not think of the core or the crown but of the tangled mass of dead straw-yellow foliage.

The canyon was an ideal camping ground for Indians: there was plenty of good water; the water attracted wild animals which



could be killed for meat: cottonwood, alder, sycamore, mesquite and palm provided fuel, shade and building material. On the flatter rocks one may still see the big holes in which the women of the Cahuilla tribe, who once inhabited the canyon, ground up acorns for flour.

The excellence of the site had been discovered by the Boy Scouts. Under the trees was a camp of four hundred of them. They had spent their Christmas holiday in this bewitching, well-watered dimple. They had slept on the ground under the shelter of the palms; they had listened to the call of the coyote, the grey wolf of the wilderness, and the plaintive, quivering note of the ground owls; they had seen the desert plants shining in silvery white patches in the moonlight and the rocky heights rising to the unclouded glory of the stars.

When I arrived they were packing up, loading trucks, buses and private cars with camp equipment and personal belongings and making the palm grove ring with floods of joyous laughter. It was good to hear them; their merriment completely destroyed all memories of the dreary sands, bleached bones and savage desolation lying not a hundred yards away from the palms and the water hole.

Almost two miles south of Andreas Canyon is Palm Canyon. To a lonely traveller the distant sight of palms in a desert always brought the joyful knowledge of the presence of water; the map is dotted with such names as Palm Springs, Palm Canyon, Seven Palms, Hidden Palms, Dos Palms, Seventeen Palms, Two Bunch Palms and Low Palms.

Palm Canyon was, in 1939, one of the outstanding attractions to visitors to Palm Springs. Here several thousand palms bent in dreamy beauty over a romantic stream and gave much brightness to an otherwise sombre ravine. These patriarchal trees were said to be the ancestors of all the ornamental palms which grace the gardens and line the boulevards and avenues of California. From a high ledge, the Hermit's Bench, where the cars parked and a trading post sold postcards and souvenirs, you looked down upon the startling contrast between the dark, worn, weather-stained walls of the canyon and the sunshafts streaming across the green roof which hides the stream, but you would not see it in silence.

Every hour of the day cars arrived and people chattered.\*

I was told of another canyon, Chino Canyon, lying about five miles north of Palm Springs, which had groves of cottonwoods and sycamores and two springs, one hot and one cold, bubbling up side by side. I mounted to this canyon by the roughest road I had so far trodden but the valley was full of flowers — saffron poppies, yellow daisies, white clover and many others less conspicuous for size and beauty. Thirsty and hot I trudged along; the mouth of the canyon marked by a splash of bright foliage yawned in front of me promising a restful shade. As the road was so difficult I felt sure that no one who respected his car would travel it and I should enjoy the springs in peace.

When I reached the promised haven I was confronted by a high barbed wire fence, a gate double-padlocked and a notice 'No Trespassing'. The canyon had been closed to protect an important source of the domestic water supply of Palm Springs. Being a law-abiding Englishman I observed the notice, lay down on bare sand and ate my lunch, with the cottonwoods at my back instead of over my head and giving me shade.

The cottonwood, like the Washington palm, is not a true desert tree for it needs a considerable amount of water. In desert areas it is never found except by the side of canyon streams, water holes and springs. It is a big tree, from fifty to seventy-five feet in height, with thick limbs, drooping branches and a round-topped open crown. Its leaves in autumn turn a beautiful bright yellow, about the only real autumn tint to be seen in the desert.

From one horizon to the other there was no cloud to cast a shadow and being unable to withstand the flood of heat from the wide oven above me I departed early. Presently I met two middle-aged people coming towards me: they had left their car farther down the valley. I at once told them of the locked canyon and then added 'How strange it is to see two Americans walking!' The lady, rippling with smiles, replied 'But my husband isn't American; he's Scotch and I'm slowly killing myself trying to keep up with him.'

At the foot of the talus, under the shadow of a great rock, I

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\* In 1940, fire swept the canyon from end to end and destroyed the stately trees.

halted to rest. A car passed slowly by trying to navigate the channels between the stones. In it were two good-looking young people, a man and a woman, who gave me a cheery 'Hello.'

The shadows of San Jacinto were already lengthening over the plain and only the tips of the San Bernadino mountains were alight in the opposite direction when the car reappeared. Its kindly occupants, seeing me still sitting, guessed I was tired, took me on board and drove me back to Palm Springs.

That night, New Year's Eve, I sought the Desert Grill, one of the most popular of the local restaurants. The place was packed and I had to wait half an hour for a seat. My turn came at last and the waitress showed me to a table large enough for six people. I had not even seated myself when the man who had driven me home in the afternoon was at my side saying, 'If you are alone will you join me and my wife and have your meal with us. No man should dine alone on New Year's Eve.'

That little incident is typical of the United States. I can't imagine it happening in a smart restaurant anywhere in Europe.

My visit to Chino Canyon was the last one I could possibly make entirely on foot, but with the help of a local bus service I managed to see two others and also the Gorgonio Pass. For the latter I took the bus to Banning and walked back as far as Cabezon. The pass is flanked by the San Jacinto and San Gorgonio mountains, their sides gashed with deep gorges and their eleven-thousand foot summits covered with snow. It is crossed by a smooth, wide, modern highroad and a railway line. At Cabezon the railway trains take on a second engine to help them up the steep grade. When the railway was made in 1875 the railway company, to prevent hostilities, had to promise free rides to the local Cahuilla Indians. I imagine this free transport has now ceased: hostile Indians are scarce in these days.

The San Gorgonio Pass is noted for its winds. It is generally said that they blow constantly from the west, but when I walked over the pass the wind was blowing from the desert and, moreover, was bitterly cold, not hot. The western winds are responsible for the sand dunes already noted and for the little mounds of sand which lie on the lee side of the bushes, reaching almost to the topmost twigs. They have been known to lift the tops off motor

cars and, during a single crossing of the pass, to scour off all their paint with the aid of the sand. They were responsible, in pre-railway days, for the cessation of stage-coach traffic because the passengers objected to having to dismount in order to help dig the coaches out of the sand.

So far I had discovered no genuine solitude. I tried again, this time in Whitewater Canyon, one of the main drainage canyons of the San Gorgonio range. The floor of Whitewater Canyon was nothing but a mass of sand and boulders, through which trickled a tiny current of water; a dusty rough cart track made walking possible but tiring. Alone at last I made myself comfortable on a smooth rock with my back against a boulder and my feet towards the outlet. In the middle distance was a clump of yellowing cottonwoods; in the background the majestic peak of San Jacinto, its massive jaggedness streaked with snows glittering like rivers of ice. All around me were gigantic boulders amongst which lay stranded torn, grey, giant stems crashed by floods from the surrounding heights. In times of high water, or immediately after, the road up Whitewater is quite impassable, but on that hot sunny day it was hard to believe that the whitened boulders could ever be drowned, or the whispered merriment of the tiny stream become a terrifying growl.

It was easier to realise the value of water to the desert people especially in the days before there were any dams and water-works, and why it was their constant thought even in intervals of leisure. They represented the lightning which came with the rains by weaving zigzags in their baskets and painting them on their pots, clothes and bodies. They cherished the snake because it guarded the water sources, painted it on their girdles, wove it in their blankets, shaped it in their rings, carved it in stone and, with its wavy lines, decorated caves. Their ceremonial dances are often an appeal for rain or the filling of the springs.

In Whitewater Canyon I was undisturbed. I tried another — Snow Creek Canyon to which a dusty road squirmed its way from a point near Palm Springs station across the biggest talus slope I had seen. To cut off the curves and the bends of the road which crossed it I tried to go straight ahead to the canyon mouth, but it took me longer to go round the boulders and up and down

the deep washes than if I had stuck to the apology for a road.

The entrance to the narrow part of the canyon was barred and locked to protect yet another source of water for Palm Springs. Outside it, however, there was a grassy, tree-shaded nook through which the stream came tumbling amongst the rocks. Within its shelter all I could see was the green of grass, the silver of the running water and bits of blue sky amongst the arching trees, yet this haven of rest was not twenty yards long and not a dozen wide. Beyond its narrow limits was a great expanse of sand and cactus in whose dry wastes the stream was soon exhausted and out of which bald mountains rose like so many models in a geological museum.

I drownsed there through a long, hot afternoon, disembodied, with all that hid me from myself dissolved. I wasn't lonesome. I was too busy looking at and keeping company with myself. When the day gave signs of going I shouldered my ruck-sac and passed from the canyon to the road across the plain. Silence lay lightly on the land and all the details of the distance were sharpened by the dry clear air which did not seem like air but rather a thin transparent lilac veil.

As I had now visited all the canyons I could reach on foot and was not yet minded to quit the oasis I turned my attention to the mountains leaning down over the village street. I had heard that if I followed a certain trail it would take me behind the lowest foothill range and bring me back to Palm Springs in about four miles. I left about eight in the morning. Clouds, as if bewitched, stood in a windless air above the eastern mountains and a kind of Scotch mist was gently falling on those close at hand. I was, however, assured that there would be no rain.

I mounted slowly for the path was steep. The trail, well marked by footprints of man and beast, was wide and clear: it was, in fact, a very good trail except for the stones and the grade. I went on and on, winding this way and that, for the path sought every point of the compass in turn, avoiding the edges of precipices and the cruel cacti waiting to catch and hold me with their hooks of steel.

I think the most prominent of these vegetative devils, on this trail, was the barrel cactus or bisnaga, often found in the same

localities as the Bigelow chollas whose stubby arms always reminded me of amputated stumps. I don't know which of these two varieties of cactus is the worse. The chollas certainly shed joints which stab the feet of horses and spike pedestrians through their boots, but they do not look quite so dreadful as their barrel-shaped companions.

The barrel cactus is a single cylinder, from six to seven feet high, marked with a number of parallel ridges. Along the ridges are placed the dark red or yellowish spines, each two or three inches long, hard as ivory, sharp as needles and usually curved. Evil as the barrel cacti look they have their good qualities. I was about to write 'their good points', but the points of a cactus are all of the devil. The first thing to be said in favour of the barrel cactus is that as it tends to lean slightly to the south it may be a help in determining a direction: hence the name, the 'miner's compass'. The second is that by means of its short, spongy, shallow roots it can quickly absorb a large quantity of water during a sudden downpour. Rapid loss of this is prevented by the cylindrical stem, the reduction of leaves to thorns and the contraction or expansion of the fluted surface according to the amount of stored water. Even if uprooted it will live for months or years on its own supply of moisture. Therefore, if you know how, you can, in case of need, cut off the head, scoop a depression in the pulp and obtain at least one long drink of the flat-tasting liquid which oozes into the hole.

Amongst the barrels and the chollas were many yuccas bristling with pointed leaves. The living ones lifted high their big, creamy-coloured, cone-shaped buds, full of sugary sap, or their fully matured bell-shaped flowers: the dead ones showed nothing but a hollow network, a woody skeleton, ghostly enough to make one feel creepy on a moonlit night.

After quite a long climb I reached a point known as 'Desert View' but there was not much view: the mist was thickening. There were now two trails. One fairly obviously led round the mountain back to Palm Springs but on it there were no footprints of any kind. The other was well and recently trodden and I decided to take it. I mounted and mounted until, at about two in the afternoon, I met four Americans coming down. They said they

had followed the trail to where it became very bad and had then thought it best to return: it was their footsteps I had been following. I asked them if they had noticed any footprints or hoof-marks leading beyond the point at which they had turned but they had not looked to see. I went on. I kept climbing, far beyond their upper limit, until I topped another ridge and saw in front of me, on the other side of a valley, a wall of rock that it would take me a day to surmount. Here and there I could pick out little bits of the trail winding up amongst the cliffs, losing themselves in crevices and then wriggling out again to continue their upward way. It was useless to go on. I, too, had to beat a retreat.

I came down much more quickly than I had gone up and was back — tired and very hungry — at Desert View by four o'clock. By this time the mist had turned to heavy rain and I still had some way to go. It seemed fairly certain that the trail I had noticed on my ascent, as leading from this spot back to Palm Springs, must be shorter than the one I had used and would lead me home before dark. I took it.

It was much steeper than I had anticipated and full of big, loose stones made slippery by the wet. I fell but sat down as I tumbled. For some time I was unable to rise. I had been walking unceasingly for eight hours, had had no food and, as the reader is aware, was not exactly a young man. When I did manage to get up my legs were trembling like grass in a breeze. I dithered along carefully for a little way and then flopped again. By the time I was ready for another effort night had already filled the canyons and darkened the slopes.

I could see the lights of Palm Springs not so very far away and I believed there were no dangerous precipices on this face of the mountain. The question was how to descend in the dark with legs which sternly refused to obey my wishes. I adopted much the same method as that of a timid child going downstairs for the first time. I sat on the cold wet ground and levered myself down with my hands and elbows feeling, before each move, either with my stick or my feet or both, for the next possible foothold. Several times I saw what I fancied was a trail but it was always nothing but thorny bushes or jagged stones making fun of me in the night.

Finally, with much damage to the seat of my trousers and a

fine collection of scars on my knuckles, I came within sight of a house. There was no light anywhere and no one answered my call: the house was uninhabited. That removed all fear of efficient watch dogs. I slid closer and closer till I reached a wall whose top was under my feet. Beyond this wall was a courtyard hollowed out of the hillside. How far should I have to drop and what should I fall on if I did drop? I couldn't tell, so I thought I'd better not drop.

The joke was that I couldn't stay where I was. I was hanging on by my elbows and might slip at any minute. I don't know exactly how I carried out my next manoeuvres, but I think if they had been photographed they might have given points to Charlie Chaplin. I managed to wriggle round on my stomach, fish about with the handle of my stick for a firmer hold, pull myself over the nearer boulders and escape a Humpty Dumpty end to my day's outing. Whereupon, realising what a comic exhibition I must have been giving by my unconventional athletics, I was forced to laugh at myself.

After a short breathing space I started another exploratory expedition. I couldn't strike any matches because I had none. All I could do was to feel my way with my hands, catching at any chance hold, clawing with my feet and poking with my stick. As they say in Vermont I was 'as busy as a cat with two mice'. I was sure I was actually nearing the road on which the empty house must stand when I slipped at a spot where neither foot nor stick could find anything but space beyond. I dared not go forward and this time I could not go back. I was wedged in between two steep-sided rocks. To add to my merriment I was sitting in a pool of water.

So far, the little adventure had had, viewed as a mere incident of travel, a spice of fun in it, but things now began to assume a slightly different complexion, especially as I had to face the possibility of spending the night sitting in a puddle and growing colder and wetter. A chill might easily be as dangerous as a fall. What to do about it?

An Indian, at the first hint of anything strange or dangerous, has learned to be still and keep on being still, but perfect placidity on my part would not solve the difficulties of falling tempera-



ture and rising rainfall. Then I thought of the story of a negro who once explained his habitual calm in all cases of trouble by saying he had 'learned jus' to cooperate wid de inevitable', and I began to think how I might cooperate.

I remembered that earlier in the day, when I was quite high on the mountain side, I could hear people calling to each other on the tennis courts down below. Perhaps if I shouted some one would hear me. I shouted. No answer: I tried again. I practised different vowels to find out one which would carry farthest and that I could also hold on to for a good long yell. I discovered that for me, this was *a* pronounced as in *Kate*. Then I tried it on various notes of the scale, higher and lower, major and minor, till I accomplished a fine piercing note with a touch of terror in it. Believe me or not I became hilariously happy.

My vocal exercises were as funny as my athletic ones but I was mightily pleased with the result of my experiments and pitched my shrieks into the valley. At the end of about two hours a voice came sailing up from amongst the neon lights. It was as clear as if it had been within a few feet of me though fainter.

'Who's calling?' it said.

'An old man lost on the mountain.'

'Where are you?'

'Back of an empty house behind four palm trees.'

'O.K. See you later.'

In about a quarter of an hour two members of the local official rescue squad found me. They had to lift me down from my humid throne and carry me to the car, for I could neither walk nor stand. Once inside the car, with the tension removed, I began to shiver so violently I dared hardly open my mouth for fear one of my dentures should eject the other. By the time I reached the house in which I was living I had so far recovered that, with the movements of a very drunken man and the help of my rescuers, I managed to reach the door. One of the squad, as we careered along the path, remarked 'A man of your age has no business to go walking alone in these treacherous mountains. You stick to the plain. You won't come to any harm there.' I offered a reward for services rendered but it was refused. 'This kind of thing is what we're here for', they said.

No meals were served at my lodgings and I was desperately hungry. I drank a stiff whisky, took a hot bath, put on dry clothes, had another whisky and quivered along to a restaurant where I dined with one of the bar-tenders who was then off duty. Under his guidance I sampled three different varieties of alcohol — sherry, burgundy and brandy — in substantial quantities and ate a big steak with suitable accessories. At the end of my gargantuan meal he asked 'Now d'ye want anything else?'

'Yes', I said, 'I want some one to take me home, kiss me and put me to bed.'

'Well', he replied, 'I'll take you home but I'm damned if I'll kiss you.'

I woke the next day at two in the afternoon, tired but without any sign of a cold, and at a loss to determine whether it was the amount and variety of my liquid refreshment or the desert air that had averted all evil results.

When my soft-voiced, cheery little darkie maid came to tidy up my room I apologised to her for all the mess I'd made. The carpet was a mosaic of wet patches, clods of mud and deposits of sand and gravel. She looked at it all with a merry twinkle in her eye and remarked: 'Dirt! I don't mind no dirt. If thay wasn't no dirt I'd have no job.'

## CHAPTER XXV

### FROM THE DESERT TO THE OCEAN

#### *Palm Springs to San Diego*

THOUGH the last stage of my excursion was not a very long one I broke it twice, at Indio and El Centro respectively, partly out of curiosity and partly because of awkward bus connections. The journey was varied in its interests — desert and sea, plain and mountain, cacti and melons. The first section was through the southern part of the desert trough of the Coachella Valley, a valley which extends from the pass of San Gorgonio to the Salton Sea.

At the outset the roadside was more or less bordered with tamarisks and cottonwoods, interspersed with highly coloured advertisements inviting the traveller to spend his time at some dude ranch or to purchase one or more foods, cosmetics or whiskeys for the satisfaction of some supposedly urgent demand. Small irrigation canals, fed by wells, crossed and recrossed under the road.

The words *wells* and *springs*, as parts of the names of places, are scattered over the map of this valley with a frequency which indicates their importance and also the direction of the old roads and trails. At Indian Wells the fragments of pottery which strew the ground around the mesquites give certain evidence of a former native encampment.

From Indian Wells to Indio the date palm shares with the tamarisk the honour of bordering and sheltering the highway. As I dropped off at Indio the police had just arrested two young men for stealing a car and robbing a store of cigarettes, pea-nuts, bars of chocolate and bottles of sweets. They had also arrested, on the ground that they might be accomplices, two shabby individuals who had travelled as hitch hikers on the same car. As the thieves had to be sent north to the country jail for detention until their

trial their two innocent but suspected passengers had to keep them company.

Indio is another oasis, but differs from Palm Springs in being dependent not on tourists but on dates and on water from wells and not from springs. Some of the wells are very deep, as much

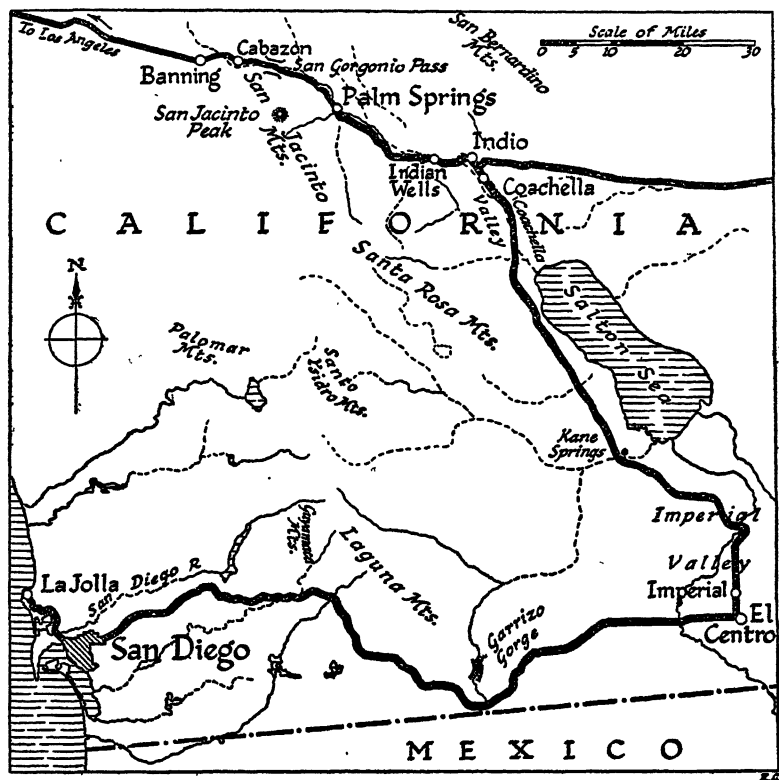


Fig. 38. Palm Springs to San Diego

as 2,000 feet, and the water is lifted by electric pumps. It runs in big pipes to tall cylindrical cement 'stands' from which it is distributed as required by means of smaller pipes. In the near future Indio is to receive irrigation water from the Colorado River.

Many things, far more than I have any intention of mentioning, are grown with the help of the wells: they include an amazing variety of fruits, grains and vegetables. The most striking, how-

ever, is the date palm which, as the Arabs say, needs both fire and water to bring the fruit to maturity. The wells provide the water: the sun provides the fire. I found Indio much hotter than Palm Springs. Indio is only twenty four miles south of Palm Springs but, whereas the elevation of Palm Springs is 430 feet above sea level, that of Indio is 22 feet *below* sea level.

The date industry in the United States was organised on a commercial basis as late as 1915 when the government imported off-shoots from Iraq, Asia Minor and North Africa. The results have been so successful that, over thousands of acres, one has the impression of being in Africa except that the palms are planted at regular intervals like apples in an orchard. But they are still palm trees and in submitting to this regimentation they have lost nothing of the poetic charm which belongs to their tapering shafts, their graceful crowns and their long, drooping, glossy fronds. Where, as in many instances, grape-fruit is grown between them the regularity of their ordering is obscured and the scene is that of a gold-spangled, feather-crowned jungle.

The chief variety of date grown commercially at Indio is the Deglet Noor (the date of light), famous for its shipping and keeping qualities, but there are many more. In pursuit of knowledge I visited the Shields Date Gardens where a hundred and nineteen varieties are on view. Each of them is as individual as a human being: each develops a fruit of special flavour, colour, shape, size and texture, and seeds of a special shape. One of the newest varieties is the Black Beauty, sold for five cents a date. I am not doing any sly advertisement in mentioning this fact because this date is never shipped and no visitor is allowed to buy more than one.

A date garden needs a great deal of attention. The tree is so thirsty that it has to be heavily irrigated twice a month, and as the seeds will never reproduce their kind the only way to perpetuate any desired variety is to propagate its off-shoots. At or near the base of the parent palm, during the first ten to fifteen years of its life, five to twenty-five off-shoots or suckers are produced. These suckers are severed from their parent when they have grown a root system of their own and are planted in the proportion of one male to every forty-females per acre.

The male flower is fragrant and attracts bees: the female has no fragrance and attracts no bees. Hence the only way to obtain fertilisation is to collect the pollen and transfer it to the female by hand. Try to think what this means in careful labour.

When the first heavy bunches of fruit appear they are thinned and supported on wooden frames. Later on each cluster is enclosed in a cone of paper or burlap to protect it from its worst enemy — rain! The paper cones, semi-transparent in the sunlight which filters through the dense green canopy overhead, resemble big bellshaped flowers. The clusters cannot be cut in a bunch like grapes or bananas. The individual dates in the cluster do not all ripen at the same time and they have to be picked, one at a time; harvesting takes place once a week from September to Christmas.

As if the farmer had not enough trouble with the peculiarities of the date, the weather sometimes plays him nasty tricks. Occasionally a heavy rain may wash away the pollen or a light frost damage the fruit. In these days, when frosts are expected, warning is given over the air and the farmer rises at four in the morning to set his smudge pots burning. People who cannot afford hundreds of smudge pots sometimes use old car tyres, split in half, and burn gasoline in the circular trough.

The young man who gave me a great deal of this information was a typical American product. When but a boy he ran away from home and went to Texas where he worked and earned enough money to pay for two years' education in a High School. After that he went home but, finding his parents a little peeved at his exploit, he ran away again, this time to the state of New York. There he worked, studied, and paid his way to the end of the High School course. He received no grants in aid nor did he whine for public assistance. He just stood on his own feet and got on with his job. On leaving the High School he spent two years at sea. At nineteen, when I met him, he was learning to be a farmer with a view to farming his own land.

Indio, whose main street is an almost unbroken row of gas stations and garages, was named from the Indians who lived and worked here when the place was nothing but a railway construction camp. It then had the reputation of being a 'tough spot' but it seems quiet enough to-day except for the streams of traffic,

conspicuous in which are the huge twenty-ton trucks, loaded with the produce of the fields and gardens, roaring backwards and forwards every hour of the day and the night.

Nothing in Indio itself or its environment seemed to account for the fact that practically all the men, young and old, had hairy faces — side whiskers, chin beards, full beards — in the process of sprouting. Of course I had to ask the reason. It appeared that a Date Festival would soon be held when 'we all go Western: everybody wears a ten gallon hat, a coloured shirt and some kind of beard. If you don't wear a beard you'll be fined two and a half dollars.'

As I did not wish to play at the American game of 'dressing up', had no time to grow a beard, and could not afford the fine, I departed. The man who drove me to the bus depot said, 'Your name's Young. So's mine. I'm Gordon Young and my brother's Donald but I don't know from what part of *England* my ancestors came.'

The bus took us through the struggling village of Coachella occupied chiefly by Mexican workers employed in the cultivation of dates, grape-fruit, cotton, alfalfa and vegetables. Their houses, like most of those in the other small towns of the valley, are of the worst type of slum dwelling, and it is not difficult to understand how in these times, when radio and cinema do so much to awaken hopes and visions, labour agitators find here a fruitful ground for their activities.

When we were between forty and fifty miles south of Indio, the man on my left pointed out a sparkling blue stain on the desert floor and said 'There's a mirage. Looks just like water.'

It was water, thirty miles off, the Salton Sea, lying in the bottom of a deep depression with its surface 246 feet below sea-level. At one time the whole of the valley was filled by the ocean, as is proved by the remains of sharks' teeth, corals, large oysters and other forms of marine life found all the way from White-water Canyon to Indio and beyond, sometimes at heights of a thousand feet above the present level of the Salton Sea. And the water line, formed when the delta of the Colorado River cut off the inland section of the valley from the ocean and allowed the formation of a lake, is clearly visible, as clean as a knife-cut,



*Photo: Ernest Young*

Palm Springs



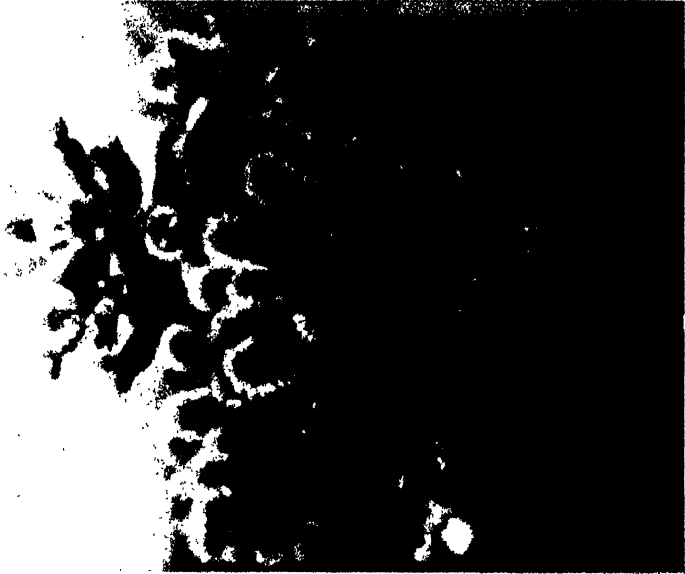
*Photo: Ernest Young*

The desert floor, Palm Springs





Dead foliage of Washington palm



*Photo: Ernest Young*

Bigelow Cholla, or Teddy Bear cactus



*Photo: Ernest Young*

Wind-drifted sand on the lee side of bushes, Palm Springs



*Photo: Ernest Young*

Whitewater Canyon



Barrel cactus



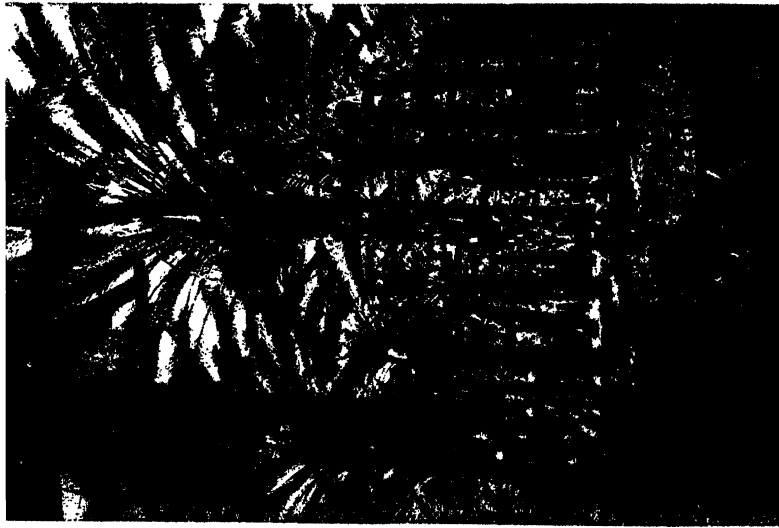
Photo: Ernest Young

Snow, Creek Canyon



*Photo: D. Mow*

**Indio, California**



*Photo: D. Moore*

**Date garden, India**



*Photo: D. Moore*

**Bunch of dates, India**



*Photo: Ernest Young*

The oldest house in San Diego



*Photo: Ernest Young*

Serra Museum on Presidio Hill, San Diego



*Photo: Ernest Young*

La Jolla



*Photo: Ernest Young*

The Pacific Ocean

along the side of the mountains to the right of the road. Another conspicuous reminder of this epoch is a small hillock of granite coated in its lower half by travertine when it was an island in the lake.

This prehistoric lake expanded until its waters spilled over the barrier into the Gulf of California. In time it evaporated and, for ages, the Salton Sea held nothing but a crusty bed of salt. In 1905, however, the Colorado River overflowed into it and created a new fresh water lake 45 miles long and 83 feet deep. Two years went by before the flood was brought under control. The lake that was then left behind is the Salton Sea, smaller now than it was and, because it has no outlet, no longer fresh but salt, twice as salt as the ocean. It is now being re-freshened and enlarged by an inflow of irrigation water: when its area reaches about 200 square miles the gain from the irrigation water may balance the loss by evaporation.

Soon after passing Kane Springs, the oldest known water-hole in the Colorado Desert, the scene changed. Desert gave way to field, creosote and mesquite to grass and trees. We were in the Imperial Valley, part of the trough which runs south from the Salton Sea into Mexico. Hundreds of cattle and sheep were feeding; bales of alfalfa, like stacks of huge bricks, were piled high for transport; acres of lettuce and sugar-beets, cotton and melons covered a plain, verdant as far as the eye could reach. Yet the rainfall in this area of abounding fertility seldom exceeds three inches a year, often no more than one.

The water comes from the Colorado River where enough water is impounded by Boulder Dam to supply the valley for five years, even though not a drop of rain or a flake of snow should fall on the Colorado watershed in that time. The sun is practically as stable as the water for it does not fail for more than twenty days in a year. You can be sure that any resident in Imperial Valley will tell you, if you ask him, and sooner or later will tell you, whether you ask him or not, that you are in the presence of the greatest irrigation enterprise in the New World. If it were not for the irrigation ditches, on whose edges rise tall lines of sugarcane, there would be nothing in the landscape to remind one of the fate of those who pioneered this region with a faith and a



courage which never failed, no matter how many bones of man and beast lay bleaching in the sun to tell the story of past hopes and failures.

I came to earth at El Centro, 52 feet below sea-level, in the heart of one of the driest and hottest areas in the United States. Of these conditions there is little evidence, so far as flower gardens, trees and parks are concerned, but the arcaded side-walks and the air chambers under the roofs of many of the houses give an inkling of summer heat and made me feel glad my visit was in the season called winter.

The heat has been responsible for something more serious than personal discomfort. "The Yankee field hand shied away from an area where a summer temperature of 125° F. was not unusual. The Mexicans who came in were accustomed to the peonage system and had a very low standard of living; at first they were glad to get any kind of work for almost any rate of pay and expected nothing in the way of living accommodation. They camped along the irrigation ditches, and cooked with and drank the mud-laden irrigation waters. After the war they were joined by Filipinos, Hindus, Japanese and Negroes. The great Middle Western drought caused an influx of dust-bowl farmers, turned nomad with their families: they had been blown out of the only jobs they knew how to do and had turned to the new agricultural El Dorado. But there were no farms for them here and they became day-labourers on the factory farms. And they were less tractable than the older class of Imperial Valley migrants. Before long the labour unrest that was sweeping the country went below sea-level and even the non-English-speaking peoples were infected. Heat, non-resident ownership, the economic depression, labour organisers, and money obligations contracted in pre-depression days, went into the brew that was soon bubbling madly. \* In 1930 strikes began: in 1934 a strike of 8,000 lettuce-pickers resulted in bloodshed when the police attempted to break up picket lines.

As I left El Centro before the sun rose there was not light enough to see the country-side distinctly but it was evidently still irrigated and green. Shortly after dawn, which arrived in a

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\* *California. The American Guide Series.*

chariot of flame, we entered the foot-hills of the mountains shutting off the Colorado Desert from the sea. We left the fields of green lettuce, blue flax and silver cantaloupes, the thousands of dairy cattle and sheep, and rose into the dry brush-covered mountains.

Near the bottom were many examples of desert vegetation, chiefly creosote, ironwood and ocotilla. The ocotilla, also called Jacob's Staff, or candlewood, is often mistaken for a cactus on account of its thorns. The stem is very short and often completely buried. From it rise a number of tall, light, whip-like, thorn-covered branches, eight to twelve feet long, which look as though they had been carefully arranged in a vase. In the spring elongated clusters of cardinal red flowers appear at their free ends. The long, thorny branches are occasionally used by the Indians and ranchers in the making of fences. When they take root and flower they form novel and attractive barriers, much cheaper than barbed wire and much more barbed. The stem contains a resin which burns with a bright flame: the Indians sometimes light the ends of dead stems and use them as candles or torches.

Amongst the hills are numerous gullies and dry washes eroded by occasional heavy summer rains. 'Watch for rocks on the pavement', that is, on the paved road, said a notice. The mystery to me was how the rocks managed to stay on the slopes: apparently they were ready to cast their gigantic bulk to earth at the slightest touch.

By many curves we made the ascent of the Inkopah Gorge, a rocky sterile gap, just wide enough for the road and the bed of the river. Later our way lay through the Carrizo Gorge, eleven miles of granite walls spectacular in form and light in colour. High above us on a winding narrow shelf a branch of the Southern Pacific Railway trailed its serpentine way through the mountains.

We pushed on into the Cleveland National Forest which covers more than a quarter of a million acres of mountainous land in the Santa Anna, Palomar, Cuyamaca and Laguna ranges with pine, spruce, fir, cedar, oak and elm. At Laguna we reached what I think is the highest point on this road, a little over four thousand feet.

Thence we descended rapidly through grapes, oranges and

lemons, as far as the outskirts of San Diego where I saw the galloping sea-horses tossing their snowy, sunlit manes, inhaled the unmistakable salt smell of the ocean and completed an excursion of close upon ten thousand miles from the eastern edge of the Atlantic to the eastern edge of the Pacific and had never once set foot in a train since I left the one mentioned in the first line of this book.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### SAN DIEGO

THE natural setting of San Diego is full of interest. Seen from the sea it presents the vast sweep of an amphitheatre rimmed by foothills and backed by high mountains. Examined in detail it is found to consist of a number of small mesas or tablelands divided by steep-sided canyons. On the north side the mesas end in a sharp steep drop of from two hundred to four hundred feet.

The terrain is not naturally fertile. The mesas are covered with a deposit filled with cobble stones lying on the top of a clay layer so tenacious that neither water nor roots penetrate it with ease. The natural vegetation is sparse: the palms, eucalyptus, bananas, acacias, pepper trees and other plants which line the streets and adorn the gardens are all importations and dependent on irrigation.

On the water-side is a magnificent harbour (Fig. 39) one of

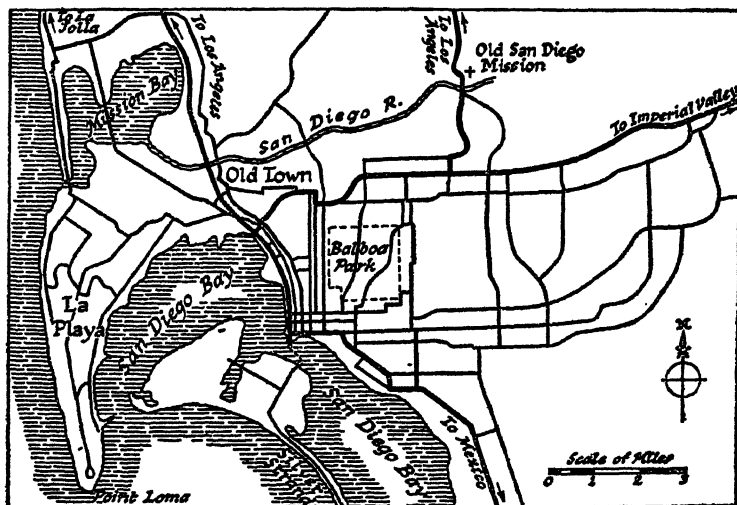


Fig. 39. San Diego

the ten great harbours of the world, big enough to shelter, as they say, all the fleets of the world at one time. It is almost landlocked by the high, seven-mile long promontory of Point Loma, an island called North Island and a narrow spit of sand, Silver Strand, ten miles long. The entrance is narrow and easily defended.

Into this harbour once flowed the waters of the San Diego River, but as the river threatened to silt up the harbour, the enterprising citizens just took it by the scruff of the neck and forced it to discharge its muddy stream into Mission Bay some distance farther north.

If I wanted to be unfair to San Diego I could dismiss it by saying that it is an American city with a water-front: that in some senses describes it. Its inhabitants would, however, and not unjustly, be much annoyed at this brevity. They would probably begin by asking why I was making no reference to its historic past and would remind me of the discovery of the harbour by Cabrillo, a Portuguese navigator in the employment of Spain, as far back as 1542, of the arrival of Portola, a soldier, and of Father Junipero Serra, a priest, to build forts and missions in 1769, of how the British explorer, Vancouver, brought the first foreign ship into the bay in 1793 and how the Americans took the city from the Mexicans in 1846.

All I could do would be to confess that I knew the four-century-long procession of historic events was crowded with picturesque figures doing gallant deeds and, at the same time, plead that my limited space would not permit the story to be told.

They would then inform me that the population of San Diego had doubled every ten years since 1900 and, as that must be evidence of something very special about either the people or the place, it ought to be explained. To which I would reply that I was in complete agreement with my critics and if they would give me the explanation I would gladly record it.

With lightness in their hearts and music in their voices they would at once rejoice about the climate. The climate of San Diego challenges the rest of the world: there are no thunder-storms, gales or hurricanes; no damp; no excessive fogs; there is sunshine every day in the year; the winters are warm and delightful; the summers are bracing and cool; the temperature is the most

equable known. They would produce so many compelling statistics in support of their assertions that I should be compelled to believe, except in the matter of sunshine; other official records show that there are, on the average, nine days in the year, during the summer, when the sun cannot be seen for fog.

Climate is the chief commodity on sale in San Diego and the customers are tourists, thousands of retired army, navy and marine officers, and even more thousands of private individuals all of whom have taken up residence, chiefly on the mesas climbing up from the sea, in order to enjoy the privilege of living in almost perfect climatic conditions.

This influx of the elderly and the leisured, coupled with the persistence of traditions of easy-going inherited from the Spanish and the Mexicans, has had influences which are quite apparent in the streets. People do not hurry and traffic moves less rapidly; there is a never failing courtesy to the pedestrian on the part of the motorist, strict observance of traffic signals and no mobs of loungers idling at street corners. San Diego is one of the few large American cities where I could cross the main thoroughfare without remembering the wise-crack that 'the only way to cross a street alive is to be born on the other side.'

The second influence in the growth of San Diego is the harbour, which attracted fishermen, real fishermen, who fish for a living, chiefly Portuguese and Italians. Of the former there are about 5,000 living mostly by themselves in the La Playa section of Point Loma, once called 'Hide Park', on account of its importance in the hide and tallow industry of an earlier era. \* The Portuguese catch tuna. They own their own fleets, recruit their numbers from the Azores and Madeira, maintain their own customs, and live such an isolated existence that many of them can speak no language but Portuguese.

There are almost as many Italians as Portuguese and they too occupy a special section of the city but they take a larger part in its life. Some of them have held important civic offices.

The safe and spacious harbour attracted also the navy and other branches of the armed forces of the United States. Many

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\* See Dana, *Two Years Before the Mast*.

units of the navy — cruisers, destroyers, submarines, tenders and transports are anchored in Man-o'-War Row, while on land are an enormous combined army and naval aeronautical base, one of the world's finest naval stations, a coaling station, aeronautical works, flying fields, a superb naval hospital and the home of the west coast marine corps.

The wages of the soldiers and sailors — there are never fewer than ten thousand of them in port — help to support a good many tradesmen and craftsmen and, as more than half the men are married, they tend to keep a large number of houses on the rent-roll. \*

Just south of Broadway is a distinct area of hash-shops, honky-tonky shops, drinking saloons, small dance halls and shooting galleries where Jack ashore can find what he considers desirable amusements, shops where he can buy trinkets, souvenirs and cheap junk for presents for those at home, and pawn-shops where he can exchange his property for more money with which to obtain yet more experience of the joys of life on land.

Perhaps it was my peaceful disposition which made me take more interest in the giant log-rafts and the 'Star of India' than in the display of military and naval equipment. The rafts, the largest in the world, nine hundred feet long and bound with huge chains, are built of Douglas fir on the Columbia River in Oregon and then towed a thousand miles down the Pacific coast to San Diego where they are broken up.

'The Star of India', a square-rigged wind-jammer, is an old timer, reminiscent of the bygone days of sailing ships. It was launched at Ramsay in the Isle of Man in 1863, and was used for thirty years to carry emigrants from England to New Zealand. It claims to be the last full-rigged ship afloat but it no longer goes to sea. It is now owned by the Zoological Society of San Diego and is used partly as a museum and partly as the headquarters of the local Sea Scouts.

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\* This chapter was written before the United States entered the war. With that entry the population of San Diego increased immensely, great factories were built for the manufacture of arms, planes and munitions and many other changes took place. But all this has not sensibly affected the truth of the greater part of this chapter.

Apart from the water-front two things found a lasting place in my memory, one old — the Old Town, and one new — Balboa Park. In the first I spent one day, in the second two, and if the reader thinks two days excessive for a park let him wait awhile.

The Old Town, in a section all by itself, is quiet and restful, in fact sleepy compared with the busy city which was built later round and near the harbour, but it is not to be neglected by the intelligent visitor. According to the records Presidio Park, in this section, is the spot where San Diego was founded and Californian civilisation began. The year was 1769: Carlos III of Spain, alarmed by reports of Russian activity along the Californian coast, sent an expedition to establish settlements. As in most of such Spanish expeditions, the priest and the soldier went side by side, if not exactly hand in hand. On the top of Presidio Hill the soldiers built a fort, the priests erected a church. The soldier raised the Royal Standard: the priest lifted the Cross and dedicated the Mission San Diego de Alcala, the first Indian mission, the mother of all the missions in California. The priest in this case was Junipero Serra, head of the Spanish Franciscans, a man already old, bent and weak but of supreme faith and intense energy. The soldier was Portola, another determined and forceful personality.

Round the fort and the mission a protecting wall was built. Within the wall, in addition to the chapel and quarters for the soldiers, were storehouses, the residence of the commandant and a burial ground. All this I knew from earlier reading. How much had later comers, aided by the weather, managed to destroy in a hundred and seventy years?

Most of it, but there are signs of repentance. The site has been excavated, marked and surrounded by a modern adobe wall. The outlines of the foundations of the chapel are now clearly visible and there is no difficulty in tracing, by means of remnants of wall, the positions of the officers' quarters and the soldiers' barracks. On the site of the church is a modern Cross, the Serra Cross, built of bricks and tiles salvaged from the ruins and erected on consecrated soil to the memory of the heroic missionary.

On the south-east corner of the compound a new concrete bastion takes the place of the old look-out. From it there is an



extensive view reaching from Point Loma, San Diego and Mission Bay eastwards to the mountains and the river valley. Down below on the flats is the Serra Palm, reputed to be the first palm planted in California and planted by Serra himself. In order that it may not suffer death at the hands of souvenir hunters it is protected by an iron fence. This palm marks the beginning of a trail, now referred to as El Camino Real, along which the padres passed north beyond San Francisco establishing missions, whose churches are the most attractive architectural features of California.

Almost facing the Serra statue is a small, modern museum, the Serra Museum, white-walled, red-tiled, with deeply set windows and doors containing an interesting collection illustrative of the early history of California. Fortunately, it has been built in a style resembling that of the missions and actually adds to the romantic interest of the site.

Presidio Hill is one of those places where, though the evidences of the past are mere remnants of brick and mortar, it is yet possible to grasp the vanished whole. The spot is quiet, still enjoys the same wide vistas, undesecrated by advertisements or modern buildings. On a sunny day you may rest under the trees and watch the procession pass — the Indians, 'in body vile, ugly, dirty, careless, smutty and flat-faced', and 'so ill-mannered that to secure some fish the missionaries have to pay them with beads, or corn', says Father Font who kept a diary: the Spanish hooded priests and steel-capped soldiers: the cinnamon-faced Mexicans; and the Americans — all fighters so far as Presidio Hill was concerned.

At the foot of the hill is the sleepy Old Town with a plaza where trees hide the original aridity and modern buildings have replaced many of the old adobe buildings: many of the latter would, in the absence of proper care, already have been but heaps of crumbled clay.

On the flats, as on the hill, there is left enough of the old to give this earliest section of San Diego an aspect far different from that of its younger offshoot. The first house to be built here, a tile-roofed square box, has been restored; sundry other adobe houses like the Casa de Estudillo, its roof supported by heavy rough-hewn timbers bound together with raw hide thongs; the

Whaley House, built with bricks made by the builder himself, plastered with a plaster made from ground sea shells, and timbered with wood which came round the Horn; a little adobe chapel which has also been used both as a house and a saloon; all these help one to piece together the panorama of the past.

Odd incidents characteristic of early times are recalled: Cobblestone Jail now in ruins, for instance, housed but one prisoner and he, during the first night, cut his way out and the next morning appeared at an early hour in one of the popular bars. If you take time and lounge about the streets of the Old Town you cannot very well be lonely and, as everything worth seeing has its appropriate marker, you cannot easily miss the things to which the civic authorities desire to call your attention. How long you stay depends on your interests and your speed: half a day is not too long: a day gives time for contemplation.

And now for Balboa Park where, as I have said, I spent two full days. The park, as parks go in the United States, is not so big, only 14,000 acres, but it is no level tree-adorned sward with pretty flowers and duck-ponds, but an area of mesas and bare-walled canyons in parts of which you are very close to virgin Nature.

The central part of it was the site of two important exhibitions, each of which left a heritage of permanent buildings of great architectural beauty in the style of the Spanish Renaissance. These buildings form a long street of cream-walled, lavishly decorated surprises with shady arcades set amongst foliage which represents almost all the limitless range embraced in the vegetative kingdom of the South-West.

Amongst the more important buildings are the Natural History Museum; the Botanical Building containing a wealth of semi-tropical plants; the California Building, the tower of which has become symbolic of San Diego, full of priceless exhibits of American art, architecture, history and anthropology; the Fine Arts Gallery, with its small but magnificent collection — Rembrandt, Hals, Perugino, Luini, El Greco, Van Dyck, Corot; an open-air theatre; and a replica of the old Globe Theatre for which Shakespeare wrote.

Most of the buildings are not only open free but all feeling of

restraint or officialdom is removed by the absence of turnstiles or of attendants collecting canes and cameras. At the Art Gallery, which I visited on a day when there was a charge for admission, I asked the collector of fees 'Don't you want me to leave my camera?'

'No', he replied, 'You can take as many photographs as you wish, but come and look first at this new Vandyck which we've just bought from Lord Amesbury's collection in England.'

I took my lunch at the House of Hospitality. The barrister-looking manager greeted me with 'Would you like to lunch in the open?' And being an Englishman not accustomed to open-air lunches at the beginning of February I readily accepted the suggestion, whereupon he added 'We shall be delighted to serve you: the hostess will find you a seat.' Why are courtesies of this kind so rare in other cities in other lands, my own included?

The stylishly-dressed lady conducted me to a table under the shelter of a big coloured umbrella: three Mexicans, in flat, black felt hats, black velvet coats, scarlet sashes and ties talked to me with guitars and fiddles; a fountain tinkled a silver accompaniment. I chose a salad whose composition sounded delicious — grape-fruit, orange, almonds, avocado and lettuce. As a matter of fact it was a failure: the grape-fruit and the orange were too much for the delicacy of the almonds and the avocado: the latter might just as well not have been there, poor thing.

After lunch I wandered over to the out-door organ, the largest pipe-organ ever built, located in a beautiful amphitheatre, to listen to an hour's recital in the open air. The organist opened with 'My Country 'tis of Thee' which has the same tune as 'God Save the King', so I promptly stood to attention and felt as if Balboa Park had suddenly been incorporated in the British Empire.

I had much fun in San Diego but I did not sleep there. I stayed fourteen miles away in the suburb of La Jolla. Now no one has ever written about La Jolla without denuding the dictionary of superlatives. The name, pronounced La Hoya, means *the jewel*. The kinds of things people say about La Jolla may be indicated by an extract from an advertisement — 'The Spanish who named this little spot knew there was no other place on earth quite like

it. The mountains, rolling shores of sandy beaches, rugged cliffs dotted with fantastically formed caves made by the pounding surf through the countless years, a climate unsurpassed in all the world form the facets of 'the jewel.'

Quiet folk who do not write flamboyant advertisements are heard to say, with conscious pride, 'La Jolla is the home of people who have all the world to choose from.' So far as the climate is concerned this is undoubtedly true. There are only two seasons, spring and summer, each hardly to be distinguished from the other. The heat is never fierce enough to scorch: it invites, not repels. Rain rarely falls, though during the month I spent in La Jolla rain fell on four days in torrents that would have made Noah feel at home. There was, in my hotel, an old lady, eighty-seven years of age, bent and very frail who walked always with a stick, whom I liked to tease. I chose the fourth day of the down-pour as the occasion for some chaffing remarks about the boasted Californian winter weather, but she silenced me with 'Sir, the earth is thirsty. It's raining violets.'

While I would not go so far as many Californians in their assertion that La Jolla is the most beautiful spot in the world, I am willing to agree that it is the most beautiful town, except one, on the coast of California. It is that unique thing in the state, an uncommercialised sea-side resort, without a shade of vulgarity, where no one tries to sell you articles you do not want, all stores and other business and professional buildings are grouped together, the homes of the humble are without shabbiness or meanness and those of the rich are without ostentation.

The style of building, in complete accord with the Mediterranean type of climate and the bluest water this side Nice, is Spanish or Italian. Houses are white or cream in colour, roofed with coloured, overlapping, semi-cylindrical tiles, while interior patios tend to take the place of the usual front porch of an American house.

La Jolla is cheerful with flowers and sunshine, too quiet to attract a mob. She is a well-dressed, well-mannered, very pretty girl and I should not be averse to spending the rest of my life in her company.

At the same time, being an Englishman, and long since past

my youth, I could still feel the pull of deeply-rooted old associations. Had it not been for Hitler I should have taken the next boat home. 'At his return home', said James Howell in his *Instructions for Foreign Travel* (1642), of any one of those of his country-men who had wandered far from British shores, 'he will bless God and love England better ever after for the equality of the clime, where there is nowhere the like, take all the seasons of the year together [he did not know La Jolla] though some would wish she might be pushed a little nearer the sun. . . . My traveller. . . . being safely returned to his mother-soil, he may very well acquiesce in her lap, and terminate his desires from travel abroad, but be contented to live and die an islander without treading any more continents.'

I wonder.

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